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MRS. CLYDE

JULIEN GORDON

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The Story of a Social Career

By
JULIEN GORDON
Author of A Puritan Pagan

New York
D. Appleton and Company
1901

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MRS. CLYDE

CHAPTER I

"WHY, girls! Double puffs all round! Ringletta, too, with her curls tucked up! What a surprise! How well you all look—I meant to do your hair for you, and you are already in the fashion! And, Gella—my, what a beauty!"

The carry-all had landed its freight at the piazza steps, on which four young girls were sitting in a row, airing themselves, after their day's work, this mild November afternoon. The work had been half practical, half intellectual. They rested in the twilight.

The freight was breathless with unspent speech, exclamatory, vivacious, pretty, slender, even elegant. Her small trunk, propped on the front seat, was lowered by Ezekiel, the coachman, and left unceremoniously upon the gravel, end upward. Two of the girls surrounded and

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kissed her, two others seized the small box between them and pulled it upon the veranda.

"I only brought this valise, because my husband expects me back in the early train Monday." There was a slight toss of the head; the voice held a triumphant note. The girls looked at each other and laughed.

"Dear me," said Ringletta, "how married we are!" Her real name was Gertrude, but from early infancy her tangle of brown curls had named her. Now they were no longer tangled, but caught up and confined by the exigency of a late mode. She was exceedingly fair, sweet, refined, but her figure hardly matched her lovely face. It was boyish in its spareness, the waist a trifle short, the arms angular, and she lacked what the girls called "style"—in vulgar French, *chic*. Chic is not taste, but character—inherent; never learned. It is not a matter of an occasional good gown or hat. She and Gabriella were the beauties of the flock. Mary and Lydian were less handsome, albeit, tall and straight, and comely enough as maidens go, hardly yet out of their early teens. They were all full of spirit and energy—that New England energy

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which knows no rest until, having performed prodigies in the intoxication of its own fatigue, it breaks suddenly at high-water mark and leaves wreckage in its wake. It has not learned the value of repose.

Gabriella, although older than young Mrs. Devereux, was her particular friend and favourite, and, after a brief colloquy in the hall, attended her to her " chamber."

This was a pleasant room on the first floor, which looked out across the lawn, where it lost itself in the mill-stream that flowed by, swift and deep. Weeping willows leaned across the water, whose silence was later incited to turbulence where it turned the mills.

Ellen, the servant, and one of the girls had carried the guest's trunk and deposited it under the window-sill. This maid, who cooked the meals and served them, which double feat she achieved with marvellous dexterity, had still her sleeves rolled to the elbow, with vestiges of her bread-making between her rough red fingers and on her sturdy arms. A stalwart Irishwoman came for three days every week to do the family washing. During those days the house was al-

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ways pervaded with the smell of soap-suds; the midday meal was somewhat abridged; there was a cold-cut and no pudding, although fruit and preserves were served, with richest cream and cakes.

Gabriella was fond of sweets and ate so many that her complexion suffered. Later, when she learned, with many other things, the wisdom of abstemiousness, her complexion became very beautiful. It coarsened again in her last years.

"You are a regular beauty with your hair like that!" Mrs. Devereux removed her bonnet and its flowing veil and took off her mantilla. Her dainty girlish form, her small feet, her white hands, gave her an aristocratic air. It was not many months since she had been the belle of Dunham.

Her friend, Gabriella, was of quite a different build. She was fashioned on a Junoesque mould —tall, large, with rounded bust, full hips, plump arms. Her brow was low and wide, which, not being the fashion, she tried to remedy by pushing back her hair as best she could. This dusky hair was somewhat coarse. The eyes, under

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half-closed lids, were dark, far-seeing, searching, imperious. The nose—straight, fine, small—was full of vigour, wit and arrogance. The mouth—a trifle hard—sweetened when shaken with laughter. Gabriella was merry enough at times. Her teeth were strong and white. There was a rich bloom on her cheeks. Her hands were short and broad—the hand of action—with slightly spatulated finger tips, denoting the dramatic element. They seemed to designate that the material in her nature—markedly developed—would still be tinged with artistic tendencies; that her career would be stirring. They were sanguine hands, full of blood, powerful at the wrists, which were too thick for beauty. There was something positive about them. Gabriella Dunham, in fact, was not a celestial being, but essentially a nymph of earth, eagerly listening for earth's message, which made her glad or sorry as its purport might be, but which, at any rate, she found poignantly interesting.

"You are a regular beauty."

Now, the flattery of those we envy is rarely convincing, and Gabriella envied Mrs. Deve-

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reux. She approached the mirror and looked at herself. "I did not suppose," she said, with a half sigh, "it was the right way."

"I had Monsieur Dioméde dress mine for the Sears's party last Tuesday, and yours is better done. You are wonderfully clever."

One unconsciously wounds the vanity of others by being their superior, and Gabriella had so long been everybody's superior in Dunham that her friend's generous tribute, so pointedly expressed, was unusual. It was rather the mode to decry her, and if the girls did not dare snub her, they certainly rarely flattered her. Her father was mayor of Dunham, universally respected, an important member of a growing community, which had named its township after his family. His eldest daughter was treated with courtesy by the men who were under obligations to him. She was less honoured by the women who were unconsciously jealous of her.

Now, however, the tables were turned between these two. Elevated to the importance of the *madame*, with a nice house in Boston, a comfortable income, and an adoring husband,

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Clara, or Coy Devereux, as she was called, could afford to be encouraging.

"People always say I am so clever." Gabriella spoke bitterly.

"Well, my dear, you are a very accomplished young woman." Mrs. Devereux was a trifle patronizing, as from a ground of vantage, not too remote to blur detail, but sufficiently so to lend leniency to judgment.

"And of what use are my accomplishments?" The girl gave a listless shrug.

Mrs. Devereux adjusted her curls and patted her full skirts. "Don't you care for your Tasso and Dante classes any more? You used to enjoy that sort of thing. 'Di rose colte in Paradiso il fior,' how prettily you recited that at the last sociable. Then that horrid bit, don't you know, about the count and the archbishop—I forget their names. Oh, yes; Ugolino, isn't it?"

But Gabriella did not seem to heed. "Do you still go to the Sears's class? I thought you would give it up when you were married." Clara had spent a winter in the city before her marriage.

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"Well, dear, so I did. To be married, or out three seasons, is to be shelved at the 'Hub;' but I did go last Tuesday, and some old chums took pity on my forlorn state, and I actually got partners and danced! My dress was just splendid."

All listlessness was out of Gabriella's attitude. Her eyes sharpened under their arched brows.

"There were a lot of college lads, and quite a large party of foreigners Mrs. Dennison Fay Prentiss brought."

"Foreign ladies?"

"No. But the Earl of Dearborn, who is in Lord Elgin's party. You know he is very celebrated—Dearborn."

"The author?"

"All; everything—author, diplomat, man of fashion and flirt. Whew!"

"What, that old married thing!"

"In Europe, it seems, such things are permitted. He must be nearly forty; but he left his countess in Washington, and he was very polite to all the girls, and, by the way, he is dying to see you!"

"To see me! Clara, are you insane?"

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"Not in the least! I talked to him about you, my best friend. We talked *hours* one day we made up a party to Cambridge. If you will come in next week and pay us a visit, you shall meet him. He is going to New York, but returns in a few days. He is here for some historic research with the professors over at the college. You know he is a man of learning."

"I have read his works."

"Oh, you've read everything!"

"Not quite," said Gabriella, smiling.

"And how is Perry?"

"He is at his sister's now. He is sick; he has got a fever." The listlessness returned, enveloping Gabriella in its gray shadow.

"Such a fine man."

"Yes."

"If he were my lover, I'd be proud."

"What about?"

"Why—why——"

"I am sick of it, I tell you. Manila has ruined him, his health and his future. The climate of the Phillipines does not suit him. But he will stick to it; I know him. I will be a withered old woman before we are married, if he

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doesn't die. He ought to have been a lawyer; he was not made for business."

"You, of all creatures, I declare, to talk so, who carried away the one desirable beau of Dunham, put him in your pocket, and left us on the stalk! How does he look?"

"He has not grown any taller, and I am so big."

Then Clara came and put her hands on Gabriella's shoulders. "Are you tired of him?" she said. Gabriella moved her eyes away uneasily, scowling.

"I am tired of my life. Why, Clara, I am twenty-four. At the sociables here I am already neglected."

"Engaged girls can not expect to be belles."

"Well, I have had four years of it. As soon as Walter can crawl he will go back to Manila. He is bound to make a success of the hemp. But Heaven knows how long it will take, and Ringletta is miserable because Ball Crane wants to go too. It is a craze."

"Are they engaged?"

"I think there is an understanding. We won't have any men left, except Mr. Clyde."

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"He was not cut out for adventure." Mrs. Devereux laughed.

"Well, hardly. A man of fifty, and his old mother so dilapidated and hanging upon him. He will die at his old desk; but they say he is making millions. Are you happy, Clara?"

"Yes; absolutely contented."

"That is a pleasant thing to hear a young wife say," a voice spoke from the threshold.

"Aunt Laura! how glad I am to see you." Mrs. Dunham was not Clara's aunt, but an intimacy in the families had resulted in this appellation.

She was a short person, in a brown alpaca gown, with a black silk apron. She wore a scarf of black lace on the top of her head and a white knitted woollen shawl across her shoulders. Her wide, spotless linen collar was fastened by a large brooch. It bore the painted head of a child—the likeness of her dead son, who had died before the daughters were born, many years ago. He was now a sweet and tender memory; no longer a grievous one. Her face was at once gentle and inflexible. One felt that her standards were high and even noble, but that

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had they been low it would make no difference; she would for ever remain a law unto herself, complacent. She had the self-assurance of the woman who rules absolutely her own small world; who is deemed strong because she wields sovereignity over her own immediate community. A life of seclusion engenders a form of conceit, of which the storm and stress of the outside world make havoc. She was serious, but not sad; her heart had, in fact, never been wrung. At her son's death, the pervading sense of how beautifully she bore the trial sustained her. From this lofty plane she received condolence. There had been grieving, but no anguish. Her self-appreciation was too intact for despair. She was not worldly, because, having little imagination, she did not know what worldly emoluments could mean. She had, therefore, looked with some solicitude upon Clara's marriage. Mr. Devereux was a widower, and fifteen years older than his wife. To her old-fashioned prejudice these objections were hardly outweighed by the Boston home and handsome income. To Gabriella the house and income seemed to balance the scales on

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which woman weighs the pros and cons of matrimonial venture.

Mrs. Dunham thought a boy and girl should begin life together, mutual helpers to a common welfare. If the man wore homespun, and the girl a sunbonnet, it was all the more romantic. She had thus started upon her own course, full of hope and dignity. She was romantic; she had married for love.

"Dear Aunt Laura, I am happy." They kissed.

"I wish Gabriella was as safely settled," said Gabriella's mother. "We hope next year . . . The mills are doing nicely . . . perhaps her papa . . ."

Gabriella shook her head. "Walter won't take a penny with me," she said.

"He is a very fine young man," said her mother, "and has the proper feeling."

Gabriella remained silent. After a few words of admonition to the young people to be punctual at supper, which would be ready at six, Mrs. Dunham left them.

"Tell me more about Boston," said Gabriella.

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"Why, there is not much to tell. The gentlemen all drove out to Ovid Train's, at Jamaica Plain, on Saturday, and some of them got drunk."

"Coy, how dreadful!" Yet there was a horrible attraction to Gabriella in this license. A sort of atmosphere of liberty, expressed in Clara's words filled the quiet room with fevered dreams.

"Well, my husband did not—that is the important. Mr. Train is just in with his packet, and has brought the loveliest things! Embroideries, perfumes, a carved ivory desk, fit for an empress; and dear Charles says he will buy it for me, if Train will sell it."

"And do you already know Mrs. Dennison Fay Prentiss and visit at her house?" asked Gabriella with wide eyes.

"Of course. Why should I not, when her house was always open to Charles?" Clara's disingenuousness passed unquestioned; she had not yet been to Mrs. Prentiss's house.

"Do they live very elegantly?"

"Oh, yes! The house is perfect. If you

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come, I think I can get you asked there. She gives dinner parties."

"I'll come."

"Have you a nice dress?"

"Would my taffeta do?"

"Hardly."

"I will ask mother about a new one."

The tea bell rang through the house. The table was set with cold ham, two mince pies as side dishes, preserves in saucers at each plate, doughnuts and apples in plated baskets. Mrs. Dunham poured the tea; Mr. Dunham carved the ham. Ellen bore in hot biscuits, which she dispensed.

The host was a tall, spare man, dressed in broadcloth; he always put on a black suit in the evening as a compliment to his women. He had small, kindly gray eyes, a handsome aquiline nose, lips full of beneficence and wisdom, and the bloom of yesterday's youth lingered on his face. Philosophic, scholarly, he was a pillar of the Unitarian church, whose tenets he vaguely held in a spiritual compromise between himself and conscience. Beliefs he considered of little moment, and the intellectual doubts which are

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to many an agony were to him things to be brushed aside as lightly as the buzz and sting of an unwelcome insect. He accepted the immortality of the soul. Minor dogmas were the playthings of children and, as such, robbed of absurdity. His calm presence, devoid of all self-assertion, commanded respect. He loved his wife and children with a vast indulgence, and yielded to them in all small matters. To consult their wishes and pleasures was the unwritten vade mecum of his conduct. He owed no man anything, was just in his dealings, sane in his judgments. He had never been heard to utter an angry word. All men know provocation; not all temptation. The solicitations which sap and desiccate, the storms which uproot and destroy, the passions which devastate the human soul passed beneath, above, around him, like noisome vapours; they never touched him. His sorrow for his boy had been deep, but not irremediable. He had a pagan serenity. He hoped to meet him in those Elysian fields where innocence and experience shall clasp hands in everlasting union. He could afford to wait. He had a firm conviction that somewhere under-

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neath were the "everlasting arms." Time and space were insignificant. To this healthful philosophy he joined much practical goodness; an ability which, if it had not secured the brilliant gifts of fortune, had removed him from its torturing cares. He had made, through his own exertions, a comfortable competence. He had never been to college, but he would have shamed many professors of dead tongues with his ready knowledge of the classics. At fourteen he had swept out his father's store and had studied Greek and Latin late into the nights. At fifty he did not sweep any more, but he still studied. He read French and Spanish. He spoke the first well, having made friends with a French refugee to perfect his accent. He had a graceful, almost childlike humour, which leavened the earnestness of his life, and lent its lightening influence to the grave purposes and occupations of manhood. He sometimes spoke French with Gabriella while she washed the cups and saucers after supper.

The girls took turns in this office. Mrs. Dunham usually dismissed the single servant with the words: "You can have your even-

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ing; we will see to the table. It is Lydian's night."

Ellen was a Yankee, who called all the girls by their Christian names. She was treated with extreme consideration, as one would treat a distant relative, tenacious of right, whose temper might be umbrageous.

She and the horse were less for service than for "help." She was, in fact, called the "help." Only two persons ever entered the carry-all at once, lest the horse should be overstrained. If there was a third, he or she tramped to the station.

The girls did housework with their mother in the morning, but the afternoons were devoted to intellectual pursuits, in which Mrs. Dunham took diligent lead, less through taste than from a sense of duty. She was said to have the "faculty"—a term expressive of some peculiar and perplexing form of capability which made certain housewives famous in Dunham for the multiplicity of their occupations and the magnitude of their performance. It must be acknowledged that at these afternoon symposiums Mrs. Dunham was sometimes a trifle distracted by molest-

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ing fears. What if the tea-biscuits should not rise while free from the vigilance of her watchful eye! What if the pies should burn to a crisp! Notwithstanding these appeals from the cuisine, she never flagged from her self-imposed task. To such of her daughters as had done with schooling, she forced herself to comment on Tacitus, to spell out Virgil, or to close her eyes in profound patience while Lydian recited, in lighter moments, from Mrs. Hemans's poems, or Gabriella read aloud a new essay of the Dial's.

In this house of virtue, prosperity and honour, an element of discord had, however, already crept. It harboured an insurgent, ready to spring, crouching, awaiting opportunity, willing to die or escape this thraldom. The strength of the parents had surely descended to their progeny. In one, at least, their energy meant not peace, but revolt.

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CHAPTER II

GABRIELLA was this rebel. Dunham is to-day a fine place, having grown with a rapidity known only to American history. Her vacant areas of waste land have been built up in two generations into a populous and splendid city. The swift river which crosses the town has granted its natural resources to the inventive industry of the robust Puritan. To-day Dunham's real estate values and personal property lie in the millions; her population has reached the seventy-five thousand mark. She is one of the famous mill towns of the Eastern world, which decks itself in the textile fabrics of her weaving. A protective tariff has permitted her to develop her powers. To-day her bells toll, her flags fly, her traffic moves, her orators declaim, her products are distributed, her street bands play, her banks give out gold, her engines snort in the view of a wide audience.

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When Gabriella was a girl the town was far less important. To her impatience, it seemed stagnant. She was too young to appreciate the first throbs and sighs, the stretchings and muscular contortions of the infant giant. It is the starved side of rugged natures which produces good work. Obstacles are incentives. This Gabriella was too young to discern. To her the fact that Dunham was daily, slowly growing apace was meaningless; she did not see that she was a part of this vast machinery and of this progress, and drink refection at the spring of such knowledge. She remained cold before the promise of a Darwin; a Galileo's *e pur si muova,* rich contribution to a slumbrous world, left her of ice. However, the doctrines of evolution may enrapture its discoverers, they will always seem a trifle pale to the individual pulsations of a maiden's heart beating for life.

The self-hood in the girl—which was of no mean proportion—panted for expansion, and if her father, nearing the goal, could solace himself with the reflection that in the Elysian fields he would meet, not alone his lost son, but such of the comrades of high thought and sublime

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disposition as he had missed on earth, Gabriella desired her Elysian fields immediately. She felt ready to hang herself on vain delusion and silly promises.

Her spirituality was not salient, and her philosophy was overtaxed. She was weary of listening to dance music trilling a measure she wished to tread herself. Her parents, in their sagacity, always advised the investing of capital. They were wont to quote the well-known adage, that you can not have your cake and eat it too, and therefore counselled the saving of the cake. Prompted by this exhortation, when still a very young child, taking tea one evening with a schoolmate, Gabriella had heaped about her plate several little toothsome jumbles, of which she was exceedingly fond, intending, while she sipped the acrid Oolong, which she disliked, to eat them at her leisure. She had even hoped to slip one unobserved into her pocket, and thus prolong the feast. Alas, for human planning!

"I see you don't like our cakes," said the little friend, who sat beside her. "I guess I do, so I will eat them for you." Thus speaking, she fell upon and devoured at one fell gulp Gabri-

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ella's hoard. It was characteristic of Gabriella that in her disappointment she did not feel angry at her friend. She thought it quite natural that people should want cake, their's or another's, and she blamed only her own stupidity. She rather admired her school-fellow's craft, and decided thereafter to follow her methods. She had once reproached her sister Lydian and called her "real mean" because she had only granted her eighteen bites out of an apple. It is probable that had Lydian refused any bites she would have respected her more. These lessons sank into the clever child's mind and bore fruit. She began to think that, in some things, her parents might be mistaken. She wanted cakes and she must have them!

She liked to read such works of fiction as dwelt on large, successful experience. She vaguely felt that fiction alone is true biography. The average biography is valueless because it deals but in data and facts. The novel, which furnishes impulse and motive, is turned to with avidity by the young. Data and facts are mere repetition—similar in all lives—whose hidden import remains unrecorded. Men in the fury

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of religious passion rarely follow tradition. She was tired of temporists. She looked upon her lover's mild routine of labour with a sentiment of contempt.

"Another year, and I claim you," he had said, as he came back and forth patiently from his voyages to the East Indian Islands.

There were moments when her poor little love affair looked very forlorn to her; it looked unusually so as she tripped up the steps of her friend's mansion in Upper Bowdoin Street, on the last day of November, with her modest luggage at her heels.

The house was not large, nor was it in any sense imposing; but it was pretty, bright, freshly painted. The maid who opened the door was neatly dressed, and ushered Gabriella into her friend's drawing-room with a ceremonious respectfulness which impressed Gabriella, accustomed as she was to Ellen's red-armed and easy familiarities. The domestics in the Boston young ladies' school, where she had finished her education, had been hardly more distinguished for amenity than the scant "help" of Dunham. A delicious sense of emancipation from her past,

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a prophetic insight into a future big with possibility, filled her as she seated herself in a cushioned corner to wait for her hastily-summoned friend.

Now, this friend was far less happy than her guest. She was, in fact, greatly worried and distraught. The ante-Christmas festivities were all announced—nay, the invitations for two or three of them were on her table, but no card had as yet arrived for Mrs. Dennison Fay Prentiss's long-talked-of musicale. Now, this was bitter enough to bear alone, but the idea of revealing the fact to Gabriella Dunham filled her with mortification. Day by day, hour by hour, the apprehension that she was not to be asked to this party of parties, given in honour of Lord Elgin, at which all the best people were to be present, had developed into a certainty. In vain she had sounded her husband as to why and wherefore a lady who had called upon her—yes, once—a card had been deposited by a footman —it lay uppermost in the coupe on the hall pedestal—should repudiate the old friendliness extended to his widowed days, and leave him and his new young wife out of her list. He had met

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her exclamations of surprise, her daily increasing anxiety, with an exasperating male vagueness, which aroused her resentment against, not only Mrs. Prentiss, but himself.

What was a husband worth, an assured income, a comfortable house in one of the best streets in the universe, if she were to be left at home on this night of nights—alone, pining, humiliated, undone? And before her friend! Some of her new acquaintances had paraded their cards with insolent assurance, dangling before her thirsting soul the full cup of their security. The invitations had been out a fortnight; there were now only six days left. She was extremely distant to her husband; she hardly spoke to him. She felt that had he had the right spirit, he would have seen to it that she was protected from insult. Perhaps he was a poor, feeble creature after all; he was certainly much older than herself. She examined his legs critically as he crept downstairs to his breakfast, crushed by her frigidity, and decided that he would soon be infirm, invalided, and she a nurse.

She sighed, and decided that come what might, she would be dutiful. She began to pity

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him and to address him in the voice which we use for invalids and for people who are a trifle deaf. She had made her bed, and she must lie on it; its hardness must be accepted.

He, poor fellow, ate his meal in silence, absorbing his mush and milk and pork and beans with a piteous longing for some of the sweet smiling which had been wont to beguile the early hours of day. He was very much in love with his wife. She answered these advances with a forced gentleness; she even resignedly offered to get a shawl for him one morning, if he was cold, suggesting rheumatism. But when he tried to possess himself of her hand, she evaded him, murmuring something unintelligible about that sort of thing being "over." He went to his office wondering in what way he had offended, profoundly miserable. He had forgotten all about the soirée. She had ceased to speak of it. There are dilemmas in which speech is unavailable. And Gabriella coming on the morrow! How should she meet her? She thought of writing to postpone her visit, of feigning indisposition, of taking a journey to see some distant relatives, but all these pretexts

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crumbled before the lingering hope that some chance of fortune, some trick of fate, would yet bring to her the hoped-for summons.

If Charles had forgotten, so had Mrs. Prentiss. She had never cared much for the plodding, stolid man, who had merely filled a niche in her popular salon, because he was unencumbered and good-natured. By some oversight his young wife's name had not been inscribed upon her books. It is certain had she known the unhappiness she was inflicting, being an amiable person, that she would have sent the note to the "little country girl" whom Charlie Devereux had fallen in love with and married.

It was Mrs. Devereux's hope when she met and embraced Gabriella that no allusion would be made to the impending function. When she felt the girl's strong arms about her, and her hearty kiss of greeting, a sudden rush of homesickness seized her. She longed to fall upon the breast of her tall friend, pour forth the hideous truth and be at once shamed and comforted. But Clara, although very human, and a woman to the core, was still a daughter of the Puritans. She therefore gulped down the rising sob,

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whisked away the moisture from her eyelids, strangled her emotion, and met Miss Dunham with apparent unconcern.

The Devereuxs dined at two o'clock and supped at half-past six, as was the custom of those days. Mrs. Dennison Fay Prentiss was the only lady in Boston who dined at six and had men servants, and her habits and hours were the topic of many an awed conclave. Mrs. Devereux was somewhat calmed by the fact that Gabriella, by some miraculous intervention of the deities, did not mention the subject she so dreaded. Charles grew happier because his darling became kinder to him. She had vouchsafed to touch his forehead with her hand in passing, as he lay stretched in his arm-chair—warming his feet and reading his newspaper after supper. It was then that the door bell announced a visitor.

Evening visitors were rare, but not, as in modern times, unheard of. The evening, not the afternoon, was the hour of relaxation, and at a time when dinner parties were infrequent, the male friend or admirer would come, after supper, to the social tryst.

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Gabriella had gone up to her room to write a letter to her mother, and Mr. and Mrs. Devereux were alone.

"It is Lord Dearborn, ma'am," announced the maid, opening the drawing-room door.

It is to be supposed that before he threw Mrs. Devereux's number to his driver, Dearborn had exhausted all the resources that the provincial Boston of those days offered him. He had in one short week been dined by friends at the Tremont; had smoked and drunk sherry at the Somerset Club with the wits of the hour; had attended a dance at Papanti's, where he had looked in vain for the gay matrons who were his most willing allies in Europe, and had found nothing better than strictly virtuous mothers and bread-and-butter lassies; he had wearily listened to the songs at the music hall, and had even been dragged an unwilling victim to a "rehearsal." He had visited the Howard Athenæum, where he found a moment's solace in flirting with a popular actress in the coulisse. There seemed to be nothing left for him to do; if there had been the earl would have done it. He had sunk into the last stages of boredom.

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Even his friend Mrs. Dennison Fay Prentiss had left him to shift for himself. She was playing whist at the Winthrops's, whose house adjoined hers on Pemberton Square. Thus, he had suddenly remembered Mrs. Devereux's falteringly given address, and the pretty crisp, nasal English in which she had said "I shall be pleased if you would call some evening." A young married lady, graceful, nicely dressed, passably educated, who blushed when he spoke to her; who did not comprehend any of his *doubles entendres*, and, therefore, frankly laughed at them; who had a charming camaraderie; who showed a row of very white teeth as she asked him questions of such extravagant ingenuousness that he had to gaze into her candid eyes to make sure that she was not laughing at him; who overflowed with vivacity, and yet was so unmistakably "honest," as the French have it, was a new sensation. The earl was fond of new sensations.

He had thought of the little lady several times since their two meetings, when it had amused him to single her out for special attentions. Her reception of these as a right, her

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entire absence of reverence for his person and his rank, while at the same time she expressed appreciation of his intellectual prowess, whose feats, to his surprise, were not unknown to her, amused this man of the world. He had therefore decided to see her again. This decision was not upheld by any of the incitements which drew him usually to feminine commerce. Mrs. Devereux appealed about as much to his imagination or his senses as would a lively kitten full of harmless trick and wile.

The men shook hands, and Charles threw away his paper; but, never a conversationalist, there was something in Dearborn's personality which seemed to make him peculiarly awkward of speech. He soon found himself crowded out from an animated tête-a-tête between his wife and the Englishman. With the American husband's conviction that his wife should do the entertaining, in twenty minutes he had excused himself on the plea of a call he must make to a business acquaintance, and Mrs. Devereux and her visitor were left alone.

The door had hardly closed upon him when

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Dearborn asked the question which Mrs. Devereux so feared. Now, Gabriella's "chamber," as Mrs. Devereux would have called it, was directly over the drawing-room, and as he asked the question Mrs. Devereux heard the young lady's chair pushed from the table, where she was writing; heard her step toward the dressing-table, doubtless to smooth a recreant lock of hair, and then lightly and firmly advance in the direction of the stairs. Her letter was written! She was coming! In half a moment she would be upon them; in less than a moment she would know all.

"We are not invited," said Mrs. Devereux, with a burning blush. It was over! Not so terrible after all! It was easier to tell a man than a woman, less galling; easier a foreigner, who would go back to England and forget the ignominy of it all in weightier concerns. At any rate, the die was cast.

"It is surely a mistake," said the diplomat gravely and quietly, with no exclamatory or wounding astonishment—"a mistake that——" Before he finished his sentence there was a flutter at the door—Gabriella entered. He

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rose and bowed as Mrs. Devereux presented them.

The girl down at Dunham had called him an "old married thing." Somehow, as she glanced at him now, she felt that the description was hardly adequate.

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CHAPTER III

"THIS is Miss Dunham. I told you about her," said Mrs. Devereux.

"I remember perfectly," said the earl, who did not remember in the least.

Gabriella's father was a gentleman, if clean hands and a pure heart, a cultured brain, respect for woman's weakness, uprightness in affairs, lofty thoughts and courtesy of manner are enough: her lover was one, if chivalry, integrity, disinterestedness, bravery are enough. Mr. Crane, the Episcopal clergyman of Dunham, the father of Ringletta's friend, Ball Crane, was a gentleman, if studiousness, abstemiousness, philanthropy, meditation and spiritual virtues are enough. And there were others. Charlie Devereux in all his blunt simplicity was yet no boor. The men whom she had known might be plain; they were in no wise rude. The New Englander who in New York to-day is called

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" self-made " is often the descendant of a refined and gentle ancestry. He is not, like the self-made man of the Empire State, grown into the railroad magnate or bank president, the son of immigrants, whose father could not spell and whose mother was illiterate.

Gabriella, therefore, had lived with gentlemen; but if there were any men like the earl in America, and it is possible that there were, she had not seen them. He was not, strictly speaking, handsome, nor had he that perfection of physical robustness, high colouring and health which one expects from his race and class. Nevertheless, in grace and ease, speech and accoutrement, he seemed to Gabriella a very flower of the world. Of that world which haunted all her dreams Lord Dearborn was the epitome; and if the flesh and the devil were not far distant, who shall say that it was not to their assistance that he owed the peculiar shiver of expectancy that shook Gabriella at his salutation. He met the anxious glance of her dark eye as it fell full into his own with a curious sense of discomfort, for, strangely enough, this rather dazzling young person, so unexpectedly

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encountered, made him feel that she was judging him. Dazzling, he certainly thought her, brilliantly handsome and most desirable. She was dressed very simply in black, but she had passed a scarlet ribbon through her braids, while the same warm tint showed at her throat.

"La belle Hamilton," he said to himself, "and here in Yankeeland!" A little Yankee girl from a manufacturing village! It seemed absurdly incongruous.

Gabriella knew her dress becoming, which gave her repose. Her hands were cold, and her blood rose to her cheeks in two bright spots, but her manner was composed, without undue boldness.

Dearborn recovered from his momentary embarrassment, and the three fell into pleasant talk. Nettled at the newcomer's attitude of indifference, the earl determined to display for these two obscure young women all the gifts, graces and fascinations, in which he was already so proficient and for which he has since become so justly celebrated. He told them things, which electrified their imaginations, of the strange, foreign countries he had visited, of ad-

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ventures by sea and land, yet was never verbose or egotistical. He charmed them with the fine point of his raillery and wit, astonished them with his eloquence, then suddenly became colloquial, made them shine in their turn, flattered them with caressing questions, threw in now and again an earnest compliment, in which there lurked a touch of feeling; and all the time Gabriella knew, as women know, all-inexperienced though they be, that it was all for her. When he rose to take his leave she was filled with suppressed excitement, and the hand which she gave him for a moment was so tremulous that the man noticed it with fatuous amusement. Dearborn was a libertine. He had already sworn to whistle to this splendid bird, capture and make it his own. He had not missed the effect upon her of a single one of his words. He had already guessed and fathomed her ambitions, wondering how best he could pander to them. He always appealed to the worst side of women's natures; it was the quicker way he thought—and fancied he had solved the riddle when he bowed his low good-night.

"It is surely a mistake about Mrs. Prentiss,"

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he whispered in farewell to his hostess—"a mistake a word can rectify." The look of enraptured gratitude which Clara gave him revealed to him what she had suffered, and that these two pretty women should owe to him a service gave him an agreeable titillation of vanity. A more decided satisfaction swept his consciousness as he once more turned to Gabriella with a last look of admiration, which she received a little defiantly.

"*Ce n'est pas la premiere venue, c'est une personne*," he said to himself as the door closed upon him. He had been at school in Paris, and sometimes thought in French. Mrs. Devereux, still unused to city etiquette, opened the door for him herself, letting him out under the stars. "C'est une personne," he repeated. "Who would have expected it in this dull hole, in these bourgeois surroundings?"

Clara, when she got back, made a rush for Gabriella, and the two executed a mad Indian war dance for the benefit of the cat, which blinked on the hearth rug. They had managed to knock down several chairs, overturn a table or two and to singe the hem of Gabriella's petti-

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coat at the fire, and were still whirling about like two mad creatures when Mr. Devereux returned. Clara ran to him and threw her arms about his neck, kissing his astonished face. She was happier than Gabriella. Relief from anxiety is one of the highest forms of earthly felicity. Gabriella could hardly have said why she danced. A sort of exuberant vitality seemed to force her to the exercise. Like all highly organized persons, she needed expression, notwithstanding her education of self-control. She felt, for almost the first time in her life, that she lived; and not that cold gray life gathered from books—common heritage of the disinherited—but a reality. They both told Charlie Devereux how delightful, and distinguished, and agreeable they thought the Englishman, and he told them they were silly, nonsensical geese, but his wife's kisses were still hot on his lips, and he was in no humour to chide her—he had been starved too long.

The earl duly asked Mrs. Dennison Fay Prentiss for the invitations. "My dear madam," he said to her, "you have forgotten two lovely creatures," and then he named them.

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"Oh! yes, to be sure. Charlie Devereux's little new wife. I don't object to her in the least. She is countrified, but she is nice-looking. The Dunhams? I don't know the name. Harriet," she called to her young sister, who was arranging some flowers in the library—"Harriet, who are the Dunhams?"

"The Dunhams from Dunham, do you mean?" cried back Harriet through the velvet portière.

"I suppose so. Lord Dearborn wants them asked."

"One of them," said the earl, laughing.

"Well, one of them, and that is quite enough."

Harriet appeared at the door. "They are pretty girls. Emily Lyman knew Ringletta at school."

"Ringletta?"

"Yes; so they called her."

"This young lady's name is Gabriella," said the earl. "She is a fine young woman."

"We don't know her," said Mrs. Prentiss.

"Oh, my dear lady, you must make her acquaintance!" said the earl.

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Mrs. Prentiss desired that the earl should meet only the best. "There are distinctions here, though you may not believe it," she said to him with a grimace.

He felt glad that there were, as he remembered Gabriella. "Of course," he said, "of course."

"You can not expect me to let the entire Merrimac River flood my drawing-rooms," she continued in expiring protest. The Devereuxs and Gabriella were invited.

The girl did not electrify the entire company. People did not hang over the staircases to watch her evolutions, or pause in crowded doorways to see her pass, nor were all the other maidens and matrons cast into darkness and oblivion. She was, however, noticed, and she was admired within reasonable limits. She was not neglected at supper, and she had partners for the impromptu dance which ended the evening. Her gown was pretty and fresh; her eyes and her cheeks bright. The Earl of Dearborn did not quite fulfil her expectations as a cavalier. He was less attentive than she had expected, but the thought that he had a countess and a little

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son floating about somewhere relegated him to an older generation. Since she owed him her invitation, she felt inclined to view him as a valuable friend, not a possible beau. The earl, however, had never lost sight of her, and while his vanity would not have allowed him to languish at the feet of a little girl from a factory town in preference to the higher game which this particular soirée offered him, he returned to his allegiance the very next morning.

Something in Gabriella piqued his curiosity. He saw in her eyes that she was fevered, and felt it would occupy an idle hour to solve the enigma of her discontent. Manlike, he attributed it to a thirst for sentimental experience—such a creature, he thought, in a Yankee mill town!—and decided that if it was this she craved she should have her fill.

"Did you tell him I was engaged?" Gabriella had asked of Mrs. Devereux.

"Why, no; I think not," Clara had answered.

"Well, don't then."

"What can it matter?" Clara asked, puzzled; but Gabriella vouchsafed no explanation.

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CHAPTER IV

He remembered her on the morrow. He came to take the ladies to see a collection of etchings, and the expedition prolonged itself with a drive and a luncheon in the "ladies' ordinary" of the Revere House. Again, the next day, there was an engagement made for a picture gallery. Clara became a little sleepy, but Gabriella's enjoyment never flagged. The trysts multiplied. By tacit consent, Mrs. Devereux dropped out of them. She was naturally a good little woman, full of household cares and solicitudes. It was rather a relief to have her handsome guest off her hands for a certain part of every day. The visit, at her own urgency, had prolonged itself. Three weeks were drawing to their close. Gabriella lingered in Bowdoin Street; the Earl of Dearborn in Boston.

There is nothing so flattering as to be listened to, probably because nothing is so rare.

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There is much perfunctory politeness in the world, or at least there was in those days, and there is a certain amount of affected sympathy; but when we find the genuine article we recognise it. The rapt interest with which Gabriella listened to Lord Dearborn's lightest word, the almost anguished attention she accorded to his descriptions of his world, the palpitating questioning of her whole attitude, might have deceived a keener reader of feminine mystery. It deceived him. He was becoming seriously épris of this odd, beautiful young woman, who so trustfully accepted all his propositions, walked, drove, ate with him. He was also becoming somewhat impatient. He had allowed the Elgin party to leave without him. The countess wrote that Washington bored her. His plea of literary and historic research amid the annals of Cambridge College, and the inspection of such musty palimpsest as the Boston library offered for his work on America, was becoming suspiciously prolonged. Boston is chill and windy in December, and the public tables of a restaurant and the halls of museums are not convenient places for love-making. The

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earl had caught a cold in his head standing about in draughts and on street corners, and he was beginning to feel cross. It is all very well to be fascinating, but to be fascinating under such conditions is inconceivably distasteful. Yet there was that about Miss Dunham which arrested upon the man's lips any suggestion of more propitious tête-a-têtes, and then, in fact, where and how and when? She was a lady, if a facile one, and he instinctively felt that she would be alarmed and perhaps hurry back to Dunham if he permitted himself an imprudent step. He was allowed to call frequently, it is true, in Bowdoin Street; but Mrs. Devereux was generally present, and Mr. Devereux always a possibility. Gabriella sat at some distance from him embroidering the seam on a nondescript garment, which she said was a flannel petticoat for her sister Ringletta. It was, in fact, a part of her own marriage outfit. She had been at work upon her trousseau for two years.

At last the earl's determination to gain an opportunity of greater expansion, amid safer surroundings, seemed miraculously granted. Mr. Devereux was called by a peremptory sum-

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mons to the sick bed of a widowed sister, who was to undergo surgical treatment. Mrs. Devereux decided to accompany her husband. Gabriella offered to return to Dunham, but, as Christmas was nigh, and as she had arranged to pass it with her friends, it was concluded that she should remain and await developments. Mrs. Devereux thought the sister unduly alarmed, which, in fact, proved to be the case, and in four days Clara had returned to Boston. These four days, however, were to leave their indelible mark upon Gabriella's destiny.

On the morning of the Devereuxs's departure, Gabriella received a letter from Walter Perry. He was recovering from his illness. He was now able to leave his room, to go out; and since she did not come back to see him, he had decided to come to town to see her. The letter was reproachful. She had only written to him twice during her absence. The letters were not such as she had once addressed to him. They were kind but cold. A cooled affection is always kind. Remorse pays tribute. He found fault with their tone. He seemed perplexed and

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dissatisfied. He ended his missive with the hope that she had not forgotten that this trip to Manila was his last. He should return in the spring and claim her. He insisted upon this, repeating several times, "We will be married in June." He told her that on the following day, at three o'clock, he would call upon her in Bowdoin Street, and finished his letter with protestations of ardent devotion.

Now, Gabriella had made an appointment with Lord Dearborn for that very hour that very afternoon. He was to call and take her for a walk. She did not know that, having learned from Mrs. Devereux of her intended absence, he had mentally decided to postpone the walk and to pass the afternoon with the girl in her friend's drawing-room. But, had she known it, her only disquietude would have sprung, not from any apprehension of the solitude à deux, but rather from vexation that a third should venture to disturb such rich communion.

To her it mattered very little if she saw Dearborn in the streets or between closed doors. All she asked him to give her, there or here, was the knowledge for which she panted. Walter

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Perry did not tell her if his stay in Boston would be prolonged, and there was no time to answer him. His letter caused her a certain degree of compunction. He had been ill, he was evidently hurt; but the thought of putting off the earl, of losing the joy of her afternoon, the pleasure of, perhaps, passing some of her Dunham acquaintances—in town for the holiday shopping—in the company of a man whose elegance caused persons to stare after them, filled her with anger. Walter's visit seemed to her purposely inopportune, uninvited—a persecution. She had sometimes in the past accused him of supineness, of a lack of energy, of willingness to wait for her too calmly, of accepting too surely her own loyalty. Women resent such surety. She had never, however, thought this the result of indifference. It was the security born of his own absolute fidelity. The heart welling with its own wealth of feeling is less doubting than the one which distrusts itself. Walter Perry knew no such distrust and no remorse. If there had been flaws in his conduct, they were not deep ones—not such as wound. He believed too well in himself not to be sure of her, and

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Gabriella guessed it, even when she accused him in her mind.

With her, the easy conquest, as she stepped into womanhood, of the best beau of the town, of the petted and adored "young man" of all the maidens and their mothers, had sufficed. Not analytic, her pride had lured her into the belief that she was attached to him, which belief had been kept alive by the envy of the other girls and the absence of any more important suitors. What was there in Walter Perry to so attract women, or, at least, the women of his village? One must fit standards to environment. He was not better-looking than Ball Crane; nor so clever as Lloyd Taintor, the young Unitarian minister; nor so muscular as Julian Adams, the banker's son; nor so good at the dance as Sears Williams; nor yet was he rich, like Mr. Clyde—yet he remained their superior. In later years, when he became a great general, after the war, where he so distinguished himself—years later, when his hair was quite gray, and Gabriella met him again, she understood better his power. He had not yet found his bearings or a channel for his genius. Born

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to execute and to command, he languished in his fetters. Descended from a line of warriors, the life of the camp and of the open were to form him. The times were not yet ripe.

Strangely enough he was very short of stature, shorter than Gabriella, to whom this fact never failed to bring mortification. His features were regular, but somewhat finnikin. He had brown eyes, Hyperion locks and a small curled mustache. His taste for the military had induced him to join a company of militia, to whose captaincy he had promptly risen. Proud of this advancement, in imitation of the regulars, he wore a round cloak and a peaked hat, which the belles of Dunham thought "ravishing" and "lovely," and which gave him the aspect of a tenor or a troubadour. One expected from his lips a romance d'amour; one looked unconsciously under the hem of his talma for the handle of a concealed guitar. He was picturesque.

Gabriella sent a message by one of Mrs. Devereux's maid servants—there were but three—begging the earl to postpone his call until half-past four o'clock. This would permit her to get

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rid of her lover before Dearborn's advent; and, if too late for the walk, it left, at least, a chance for a brief interview. But as ill-luck would have it, Perry's train was belated, and not reaching his inamorata's door until half-past three, when he left her, in an hour, he encountered Dearborn on the porch. The men scanned each other narrowly and passed.

"Who is the little man in the little cloak?" asked Dearborn of the girl.

"The little man in the little cloak," she answered him with sudden resentment, "is the young gentleman I am going to marry."

Her nerves were in that state of exasperation when a woman finds relief in any rashness. Her interview with Walter had been stormy. He had upbraided her with heartlessness, and the charge had left her speechless. Every word he had spoken, every tone of his voice, had shot through her the certainty that her love, if love it had ever been, was well over. Much as she had chafed under the tediousness of her long engagement, its wearisomeness, its discouragement, a speedy marriage now loomed before her, portentous and dismaying. She hardly realized

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herself that in these few brief weeks an abyss had been forever dug between her lover and herself. The promises made to her of her own cottage near the mills, a maid to wait upon her, a garden for such hours as should be free from household tasks—with the handsome Walter at her side—now appalled her. She looked at his crisp, brown hair, his rather uncared-for hands, his clothes, with their attempt at the fine dandy's, and their forlorn shabby inelegance. She smelt the perfume of the well-known pomade he used, which had intoxicated the senses of virgin Dunham, and felt that he had dwindled. Something akin to disgust arose in her breast and stifled her. Gabriella adroitly controlled, however, all expression of this reaction. She smoothed him down with pretty phrases, lulled him with false excuses, and yet as she did so, she was resolving that she would not see his face again, and in her ears was the reiterated refrain, "It is over, it is over." If only he would go and give her time —time which had seemed so long—to gather herself together, muster up courage to break through this cowardice which was an acknowledgment of the other's force! How should she

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tell him the truth! She thought of Mrs. Prentiss's musicale, and of the men and women she had seen there. She thought of Dearborn, and her whole soul revolted at the prospect of a narrow life at Dunham, spent with this once-admired village swain. And it had seemed sweet!

He was moody when they parted; albeit, he insisted he should remain in Boston and visit her again on the next day. He named the hotel where he was stopping and left her miserable—and it was in this mood of misery that Dearborn found her.

The defiant announcement of their relationship whetted the passion of the earl with a sudden sting of jealousy. "Ha, ha!" he laughed. "Do you mean to tell me a glorious creature like yourself, made to rule the souls of courtiers, is to be tied to a ridiculous coq de village like that! Ha, ha! Try another form of play with me, Miss Dunham. This joke is hardly in good taste, and does you little justice."

Her reply had in it a vestige of that pluck in which she was not lacking, but his questions

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and his comments sealed Walter's fate. Her faltering fancy died in the throes of an unexpected pain.

Before the earl had left her, she had unburdened her heart to him, and told him all her doubts and fears.

"You do not now love him," he had said seriously and kindly, desisting from any further use of those weapons of ridicule which he but too well saw had done their work. Before he left her, in the late twilight, she had promised him to write that night to Walter Perry his final and irrevocable dismissal. "You will be more at peace," the earl had said to her. "Mr. Perry may have excellent qualities, but you could not marry such a one. It would be an absurd union. I gauged him at a glance."

"No, it has been a grave mistake," said Gabriella, her eyes skyward. She was still burning from the exaltation of her confession. How pleasant it was to find a friend to soothe her terrors, to dry her tears and tell her what she did was well! When the earl pressed her hand and imprinted a respectful kiss on her low forehead, just where her hair grew heaviest, she looked

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up at him gratefully from under half-closed lids. He was fraternal.

She ran to her room and wrote to Walter. She then put on her bonnet and mantilla and herself sallied forth, light of foot, if not of conscience, to leave it at his lodgings. She knew the way; it was not far.

"Give it to the gentleman immediately," she told the negro porter, who assured her that Mr. Perry was in his room. All the evening she feared that he would come—at least she expected an answer to her letter. None came, but early in the morning he came himself.

"I could not move last night," he said to her sadly; "your note had paralyzed me. I could only read it over and over like a man struck with palsy. I only understood it when it was too late for you to receive me. Dear Gabriella, tell me that this is a hideous nightmare, a dream of the night hours, and that this bright sunshine sees you still mine."

She did give him her hand a minute, but he wore the cloak. She had seen it coming up the street waving in the wind behind him, and had marvelled how it was possible she could ever

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have thought of this man, who was absurd—yes, absurd—" the little man in the little cloak," as a possible husband.

Well, the little man was found to have a big spirit. He made a fight for his girl. How could he give her up? How could he give her up, and all the hopes and all the longings of the years! Why, such a thing was monstrous — this hard struggle and no recompense! He paced the room in wildest agitation—pleaded, implored. He asked her to name the test of prowess that should win her back again; he blamed and scourged himself for having lost her. He threw his pride down at her feet and grovelled there himself; then turned as if a snake had stung him to bid her name his rival that he might slay him. Was it the man he had met on the doorstep yesterday?

" Pshaw! " said Gabriella. " That is an Englishman, the Earl of Dearborn "—she hated herself for naming him—" a married gentleman who calls on Clara Devereux." To the ingenuousness of Dunham this seemed conclusive.

He had worked like a dog through his best years of youth to scratch up the small income

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which should enable him to claim her. "Oh, Gella, Gella!" The pet name made her wince. At last he hid his face away from her and wept. She remained firm, dry-eyed, dry-lipped, before this strange agony, which touched her little—which seemed to her a sort of punishment, harder for her to bear than for him to inflict. She wished he would stop. She wished he would go away. It wearied her. Nevertheless she had never thought him worth as much during all the years she had misunderstood the depth of his attachment. She gazed at him wonderingly, with the feeling that she had never known him at all well before; that she had been stupid, and Gabriella hated stupidity. When, at last, broken, exhausted, suspecting everything but what was true, Walter left her, she did him full justice. He had gained dignity. He, at least, had ceased to be ridiculous. He, on his part, went out with death in his soul. The poor fellow loved her.

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CHAPTER V

It had all been so extremely disagreeable, and there was the further humiliating obligation of announcing the rupture to her parents and sisters, and facing the silly gossip of a small town. Gabriella felt she required some distraction. Where in all Boston could she find solace if not in the society of that good friend, that brave gentleman, that flower of foreign chivalry and prowess, Francis George Alfred Dinadan, Viscount Beaumains, Earl of Dearborn? When a despairing note from her discarded suitor advised her that he had left the city and would trouble her no more forever, Gabriella awoke to the expediency of providing herself with some form of entertainment. The fact of her impending return to Dunham heightened her wish for present recreation. The presence of the earl acted upon her always like a stimulant. Never before had the commerce of a human being

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seemed to her so exhilarating, so instructive and improving. To-day, she told herself, might perhaps be the last time they would meet alone. Was Gabriella gifted with power of prophecy? She decided to profit by this chance. She smilingly, therefore, assented when his lordship's valet—who brought her a box of lollipops with a card soon after breakfast—asked Miss Dunham if she would receive the earl, his master, that evening. The valet grinned as he left the sweeties, and thought her a very pretty young lady indeed. He was devoted to the earl, and the soul of discretion. It had been expedient that the servant should know her answer, therefore this verbal message and no sealed billet. Mr. Yellowplush descended to the lower regions, where his presence produced the same flutter in the dovecote as his master's above stairs. After such passages of gallantry as should incline the female heart to pleasure, he invited the ladies, Anne and Janet, to the theatre and a supper, at which he assured them they should meet no less a *valetaille* than that of Mrs. Dennison Fay Prentiss. This lady's fame crowned all she touched to glory, and the maids

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tittered with delight. Only, only there was Miss Dunham—they damned her in their gentle hearts—who was still a visitor. Who then would open the door if company should come?

"Get you along wid ye, baggage that ye are," spoke up old Mrs. Fallon, the Irish cook. "I'll ope the door for Miss Dunham while ye're larkin'. The Lord save us, I guess there won't be callers as'll see me if I hides back of the door knob."

The valet gallantly regretted that Mrs. Fallon could not also join them, and promised to send her a bottle of wine to cheer her vigils. "Now, mind," he said, "you drink my health at half-past eight o'clock, for I was born at that hour this day twenty-four year. It is my birthday you'll be celebrating." Well, the lie did not choke him, and Mrs. Fallon laughed uproariously and took the pledge.

In a glass case in Clara Devereux's bedroom there reposed on crimson velvet, among bits of choice bric-a-brac, a pair of fairy slippers, which a lady—a relative of hers—had brought from Paris and had sent to Mrs. Devereux as a wedding gift. Mrs. Devereux had never worn

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them, contenting herself with gazing at them in mute wonder. She kept them, with her rare china, under cover. They were, indeed, fit for an empress. They were mules, with high curved heels, just tipped at their base with gold. They were of light blue satin and lined with rose colour. They were embroidered in gold and pearls. They were that sort of adjunct to the toilet which women most covet, and Gabriella had often gazed at them with the longing of parched creatures for luscious fruits. Wandering aimlessly about the house, restless, unaccustomed to idleness, thinking of yesterday's resolve, which was at once a wrench and a relief, she stopped at Mrs. Devereux's door. It was ajar. The room was in perfect order, free to be entered. Gabriella went in.

Lord Dearborn's man had departed. The maids were in the kitchen and the pantry at their work. Gabriella went to the *étagere*, and once again looked at the blue slippers. Involuntarily her hands reached out to them. She pressed the lock. It resisted. "The key can not be far. I am certain that Coy dusts them herself." With the thought came investigation.

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She passed her hand over the top of the *étagere* and blackened her fingers, but she grasped the key, which in fact rested there.

She unlocked the door and drew forth the pretty baubles; for such they looked to her. Sitting down on the floor and kicking off her "ties," she thrust her feet into their shallow depths. She noticed that on one of them, across the sole, the name of Mrs. Devereux was marked in ink. Now, Mrs. Devereux was quite petite, and even for her these tiny marvels would have been snug. Gabriella, whose feet were far wider, could barely put them on. The difficult achievement, however, was possible, since the things had no backs. She sat on the rug and laughed. Then she rose and thrust them into her breast and ran to her own room.

There are women who so crave sympathy that they often welcome pity; Gabriella was not of these. A suggestion Dearborn had dropped at their last meeting had rankled in her mind. He had made an allusion to the disappointment her broken troth might bring to her family, and there had been some word as to money. He knew that she was one of several sisters. She

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was not quite sure if she had understood, yet it had been borne in upon her that the man meant to imply that if she ever needed pecuniary aid he was her friend. It had rankled within her, even though hardly admitted. "No, he could not, dared not, have said that!" She had in her confusion only murmured that her father was quite able to provide for all his children, but under her breath, equivocally, so hot with shame did she become at the mere hint of such audacity. He had been so amiable and respectful directly afterward that she had driven from her mind such surmise.

To-night, she thought, was a God-given opportunity to show him that she was not in need of help. She would dazzle him with her elegance! She dressed herself elaborately in a white mull, with open throat, an Indian scarf about her shoulders and half-bared arms. She passed a ribbon through her tresses, donned white silk dancing hose and—then—the slippers! She felt that she looked rich, as well as handsome. As she found movement in them difficult, she seated herself at a table near to the lighted candle dips, and was pretending absorp-

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tion in a Book of Beauty which lay conveniently at hand, when Mrs. Fallon hoarsely ushered in the earl. The woman lumbered heavily downstairs, leaving the two together. They heard the kitchen door closing behind her. He almost directly noticed the tips of the satin mules.

"Her hands are baddish," he thought to himself, "but her foot is all it should be when properly shod." He told her so, and she listened, glad to surprise him with her refinements, but much more willing to talk of other things than her apparel or her beauty. When she could interrupt his flattery: "Now, tell me of the London season again," she said to him, settling herself upon the wide sofa to which she had invited him, "and of the country parties on your estates and——"

But Dearborn had not called to talk of London levees or of country sports. "Come to London in the spring with your friend Mrs. Devereux," he said absently. "I will show you everything, and get you asked everywhere." This promise did not alarm him. He intended to return to India and hunt elephants the next

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year, and knew that London, which he detested, would not see him.

The deserted house, her proximity, the ardent coquetry for which she had evidently dressed herself for him alone was in his blood. How could he doubt that her abrupt dismissal of a lover she had kept dangling for four years, her promptness to do this at his mere bidding, her confidences, her wish to please him, the perfect amiability with which she hied to every tryst with him, meant she was subjugated, helpless, his, a facile prey, a ready victim?

Lovelace is out of date; even in those days he was already in his dotage. It takes to-day the genius of a Maurel to make the staged Don Juan other than trivial and preposterous. The artful seducer, so common a figure in the drama of the past, is to us an unreal being, at whose silly posturings we laugh, fatigued and unconvinced. Lord Dearborn has been called the last of his type. It seems incredible that a man well-born, well-mannered, far too well-bred to boast of conquest, who had thus far behaved toward Gabriella with such a show of honour, should have been so blind and so perverse. It

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may seem paradoxical to say that youthful maidens brought up in small towns are probably less unknowing of the evil all must guess at last than those reared in great cities. In narrow limits tongues have more scope, reach farther, do more damage. Such stories travel faster—stories of shame and sin. Gabriella was most innocent. She had redeemed some forfeits at fifteen, measured a yard of love or two under the boughs, where the boys and girls of Dunham frolicked and ran about together. Then she had been engaged to Walter Perry, and had, now and then, given him a frank, chaste kiss; yet she had kept her child's pure heart. Absolutely ignorant, she was not. In less than twenty minutes, if she had not guessed what Dearborn felt for her, she was already uneasy in his presence, fearful, inclined to summon Mrs. Fallon, to make a quick excuse to leave the room, to wish herself anywhere in safety; but while she wavered, her foil in air, repelling advances more and more fervid—before she knew what move to make, the man had caught her in his arms; his lips sought hers, his breath was on her dusky head. A sudden fury gave her

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strength. In one wild impulse to be free, she tore herself from his embrace, flung her strong arm out from the shoulder and struck him such a blow across the cheek as sent him tingling to the wall. Men like to awaken the animal in women, but are always surprised when it springs.

An instant later she limped into the kitchen with distraught eyes—limped, for, like Cinderella in her flight, she had left a shoe behind.

Mrs. Fallon looked up dazed from the rocking-chair where she was dozing. An uncorked bottle stood upon the dresser, an empty wine glass on the table. The valet surely had served his master better than fate. "What is it, honey?" she whimpered, a vacuous smile lighting up her flat, red countenance. "What is it? I niver took but a dhrop, my purty. Dun tell the missus on me whin she comes in from th' country."

Well, it was better so, no doubt, and when she heard him finally let himself out of the front door and she crept upstairs again through the deserted house, she could better measure the depth of her humiliation for the fact that her protectress was half tipsy.

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Three hours later it was she who let in the returning maids, for Mrs. Fallon seemed like a person drugged, and had fallen back into her chair in stertorous slumber.

One thing remained—the mule. The other was nowhere to be found. She was forced to conclude that the amorous gentleman, either in teasing vengeance or unquenched hope, had stolen it. It did but add to her discomfiture to find the missing one was marked with Clara Devereux's name. Did ever destiny play a poor girl such tricks!

Clara's lip was a trifle thin when Gabriella, leaning at her knees, her face suffused with blushes, told her all, or almost all. She did adore those slippers so! And then to have the one with her name inscribed in such a rake's possession! Could not Gabriella write to him and get it back? If Charles should find it all out and make a fuss? This seemed improbable. But there are limits to hospitality.

"Do you appreciate what you are asking me?" almost shrieked Gabriella. "I'd rather meet the devil himself than that wretch again!"

Clara began to think that Miss Dunham was

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a somewhat complicated guest. She was certainly interesting. There was no dulness where she dwelt—what with Perry and the earl and everything. But bless me! she could have slapped her when she remembered those heavenly mules—from Paris too, and a wedding gift. The girl must be mad! She, at any rate, brought responsibilities. Here was certainly another case where it would have been wiser to eat her own cake, wear her own shoes. It was now Friday. Christmas was nigh. Its mince pies were to be consumed on the following Sunday. Gabriella, in broken accents, said she must be off and homeward bound betimes on Monday. Clara acquiesced without too much lament.

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CHAPTER VI

On the Saturday, Miss Dunham's last day of city life, the ladies decided to pay some visits. They sallied forth on foot in the clear, sharp sunshine of an American afternoon. They concluded first and foremost to pay their party call in Pemberton Square. The season was a mild one. There was no snow and little frost.

"A green Christmas makes a fat churchyard," said Mrs. Devereux, as they walked along. Gabriella remembered the words afterward.

When they rang Mrs. Prentiss's door-bell at three o'clock, they were told by the man servant that she was in her drawing-room receiving company. There were, in fact, two or three ladies present, chatting together by the fireside. She rose and with the gracious ease of her assured position greeted the newcomers, begging them to loosen their tippets, and asking Miss Dun-

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ham lightly if her visit in Boston had proved agreeable. It was evident, however, from the silence of the others that a subject of some importance had been interrupted, and after a brief hesitancy, like some great bird which hovers in mid air before it swoops on the gust to seize its prey, the conversation's broken thread swept back to its channel.

"You were saying — about Lord Dearborn?"—a lady in a sable pelisse, with screwed, near-sighted eyes, cadenced her tone to the inquiring key.

"Ah, yes"—Mrs. Prentiss laughed—"a fascinating fellow no doubt, no doubt; but really, you know, my dears, it is quite a weight off our shoulders—mine and Fay's—to have him safely back in Washington. It was high time his wife looked after him. With my young sister and my nieces in the house——"

"Ah!"

"A man of such loose habits, such profligate ideas, was quite impossible, haunting my house. He can not understand, of course, the workings of our republican institutions, social and otherwise. The little girls brought up in our pure

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homes, strangely lacking in knowledge of evil, yet with their freedom of manner, of behaviour, their absence of all guile—and chaperons—are piquant game enough for his lordship's sated palate—fine morsels, no doubt, to roll under his wicked, wicked, wicked tongue. After all, he understood them far less well than they did him. Why, he made hot love to Harriet one fine morning, and he was so amazed to find she only laughed in his face. 'A married man, forsooth,' says she, and makes, oh, such a funny face! I tell Fay we provincials see the absurdity of these iniquitous creatures, who think they gull us, far more than the courtiers and Queen's gentlewomen who flatter them at home."

"I find him distinguished-looking," said a tentative voice.

"As there is a young girl present," said Mrs. Prentiss. "I can not tell you all the dreadful, dreadful things I have heard of Dearborn. Even if one only believes half of them, they are quite terrifying. I am inclined to believe that, attractive as he is, distinguished as you say, his is a dark and dangerous soul." Then she paused. "I am told his grandmother was a

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Spanish lady—as alluring, immoral and yellow as a French novel. I must confess the man is agreeable. I suppose one must stand up for one's relations. Dearborn claims cousinship with us. One of his great grandmothers was a Paulet; so was mine. Mine made a foolish marriage with a poor young officer. They settled in New Brunswick and *voilà*. I have her miniature."

A lady who had been silent, but who had the bursting appearance of one longing for speech found opportunity. "I came from Washington last week," she said, "and there, at the Secretary of State's—the great banquet, you know, given to Lord Elgin—I met Lady Dearborn." There was a movement of surprised suspense.

"Is she as beautiful as she is reputed?" asked Mrs. Prentiss. "Dearborn has promised to bring her here before they sail away."

"She is the most beautiful woman I have ever beheld," said the speaker; "the most beautiful and the most cold. She has a throat and shoulders of alabaster and a superb head; a face like a flower. Her jewels were magnificent.

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She is tall and stately. She managed her draperies as if they had been a cloud. Her voice is musical. She has the hands and feet of a Venus. She looks a creature made all of ice and snow. We talked together. She travels with a suite of gentlemen and ladies, of men and maids. She brought Dearborn a large dowry. They say he is making havoc of her wealth and his own. She was the most exquisite and the most imposing mortal I ever saw. She frightened me half to death."

"Dear me," said Mrs. Prentiss, not without a touch of irony, "whatever shall we do with such a visitor in our dull little town! The suite, I fear, must lodge at an hotel. I promised Dearborn his wife should stay with us."

"She was most simple and unaffected," said Lady Dearborn's adorer, willing to tell more, but Mrs. Dennison Fay Prentiss yawned and turned the subject somewhat abruptly. Exaggerated praise rouses antagonism. She felt inclined to greater leniency toward Dearborn's frailties.

"I dare say her perfections bore him," she said.

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When Gabriella got into the street she was filled with anger and shame. Oh, the pitifulness of it all! She had thought to bewilder this man with her magnificence in the back parlour of Clara's modest dwelling in borrowed finery! She thought of his diversion when he should read Mrs. Devereux's name upon the mule! Tears sprang to her eyes. Her native humour, however, finally came to her relief, and a peal of wholesome laughter rang through the December twilight. Clara joined in with shriller merriment, which, stifled, broke again, again, and yet again, until their eyes were wet and their little noses red.

Nevertheless a lesson had been learned which never was erased from Gabriella's memory. If experience is a flower thick set with thorns, she had plucked it, and gratitude is the best philosophy for bleeding fingers. Gabriella possessed a mind which can be taught and soon forgets the torment of such teaching. Such characters are, perhaps, incapable of profound suffering. Their tears and smiles lie near the surface and leave few ripples after them.

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On the late Monday afternoon when Gabriella was spilled from the dirty railway car upon the dreary wooden platform of Dunham station, it was raining. Her sister Ringletta stood under an umbrella awaiting her. The moment Gabriella looked into her gentle face she knew some terrible news lay hidden beneath her smiling.

"Tell me at once what has happened." She grasped the girl's arm and drew her into the doorway of the waiting-room. The stove gave out its noxious breath to mix with an atmosphere of stale tobacco and the odor of an apple which a woman—who swung herself back and forth in a rocking-chair—was peeling. Gabriella has never smelt apples since then without a vision of this hour. "What is it?"

"Hush. Come here." Ringletta led her sister to a deserted corner. "The new mills have fallen," she said; "they collapsed at twelve to-day."

"Papa!" cried Gabriella, with distended pupils.

"He is safe, thank God!" said Ringletta, reverently.

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"Walter!"

"How! Walter! Don't you know he sailed? A winter voyage to Manila, Friday. Why—Gabriella! What *do* you mean? We thought he went down to say good-bye to you."

She had asked him not to speak until she reached her home and now—— "My engagement is broken," said Gabriella.

"Well!" Ringletta raised her hands to her forehead as if her brain refused to receive any more shocks.

"Never mind all that now," said Gabriella, hurriedly. "We will have time enough later to discuss my affairs. Tell me all about this horrible calamity."

Ringletta's laughing face was stern with its story. Jogging home through the country byways, drawn by the old brown mare—Ringletta explained the team was bringing up the wounded from the mills—she recounted her tale of woe. "We sent word to Mr. Rush not to tell you on the train"—Rush was the conductor —"I thought it best to meet you. Papa was not at the mills, nor was he coming home to dinner. He was in his office. They had just

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brought him a bit of pie and some buckwheat cakes from Malvern's eating-house——"

"Yes, yes," gasped Gabriella, impatiently.

"For his dinner," continued Ringletta. "He had other reasons, other anxieties, to keep him at his desk all day. I will tell you those later—it is dreadful, too—but not so bad as this —where was I?" Once more she raised her hand to her white brow.

"Well? Well?"

"When George Deeves came running from the mills. Why, we heard it clearly. It was awful. We thought it an explosion. We knew not what. The whole earth shook and trembled."

"When did the operatives begin to work? When were the looms set in order?"

"Last Friday—the very day that Walter sailed. Everything was going perfectly—the cotton picked and carded and spun on the mules, and now—all ruins! When papa got down there it was awful: the factory girls, the men, groaning, dying—a horror. The town is a grave; our house a hospital."

"Are they there?" asked Gabriella.

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Then Ringletta, overdone, began to sob softly in her plaid shawl.

"Poor dear," said Gabriella, comfortingly. "And mother?"

"Wonderful as usual," said Ringletta. "And Lydian and Mary so helpful. Ellen, too, is good; but, oh!"—and Ringletta began to sob again, this time more loudly—"poor papa! Poor papa! He is just bowed down. But you know him, Gella—never a word; all for others, the sufferers; here and there and everywhere—soothing them, sustaining them; but he looks twenty years older. His face is all gray and his eyes sunken. Oh, oh, my father! my dear father!"

"Wall, now, I wouldn't take on so, Miss Ringletta," said Ezekiel, the old driver, in his slow drawl, turning around to address the sisters. "Seems as if it warn't right when the Lord's preserved your pa, a miracle like, and your ma and yourselves, all safe and soun' in limb—no, no, I wouldn't. Seems like flying in the face of Divine Providence."

"Enoch Plumb had a narrow escape," said Ringletta, dabbing her eyes and sinking into de-

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tail. "He ran out of the mills as they tottered, and escaped. He was there making notes for his paper."

"He's a writer now, Enoch, ain't he?" asked Ezekiel.

"He is editor of the Dunham Budget," said Ringletta. "He bought up the paper last month."

"Wall, now, is that so? Seems as if I ought to have heerd it. Them writers is mighty sharp. I guess his legs is as spry as his brain. I've heerd tell as he was a monstrous sharp young man." Tragedy had sunk to the colloquial.

"But what was the cause?" asked Gabriella, whose nerves were not yet saturated and who craved to know more.

"A defect in the construction. The weight was too great for the girders. Some blame the architect; some the builder. The partition walls fell. I hope they won't blame poor papa. It is all just desperate."

The house was, indeed, a hospital. "I see mamma has on her cap," said Gabriella, as she recognised her mother's flitting form in the hall

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between two rows of mattresses, on which lay—oh! such gruesome burdens—and the girls laughed in spite of themselves. Mrs. Dunham never wore a cap except in time of trouble. Her covered locks had come, in the Dunham household, to be regarded as the herald of disaster. The last time she had donned this helmet of defence Mary and Lydian had the scarlet fever.

Ringletta had alluded to another misfortune which, detaining Mr. Dunham at his office, had perhaps saved his life. He was wont to visit the mill-hands daily, at noon, on his way home to dinner. It was this: Three days before the downfall of the factories two packet ships, lying deck to deck in Boston harbour, laden with merchandise which he owned, had burned to the water's edge. The insurance on these vessels had expired the week before! Truly, once more the well-known proverb, that misfortunes come not singly, seemed to be proved.

Gabriella girded herself to help her mother. The announcement of her broken troth, although met with disapproval by her parents, seemed now but a drop in the ocean of their

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cares. It was received with that mute resignation which is sometimes more hard to bear than an outcry of reproach. She felt she had added one more perplexity to their full cup of apprehension. Of course Mr. Dunham was blamed. He ought himself to have tested the strength of those girders, and his endurance and his purse were alike strained to breaking. He bore himself with simple patience, almost with majesty, walking among the unfortunates of the wreck with the serenity of injustice nobly borne, but his heart was broken.

He had, at a great sacrifice of capital, built up these fabrics, which had proved an edifice of cards, for the benefit and comfort of his employees. He had hired the best talent that he knew, and the decisive verdict of the busy coroner, "the work of God," as death after death was reported, rang in his tired ears like mockery. And, then, the man was crushed financially. All his failures came at one blow. He resigned the mayoralty. If his townspeople distrusted him, he would not rule them. One friend was stanch and loyal to him, offering aid and support, moral and material. This friend

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was Mr. Clyde. He was a manufacturer of pianos—a successful one. He was reputed to be very rich. He was a bachelor, a man of fifty-five or thereabouts. He came daily to the Dunhams to see what service he could offer them. He generally saw Gabriella. She would come down, a wide white apron pinned over her frock, her hair caught back tightly from her ears, and bring him the daily bulletin. There were thirty wounded in the house. As she talked to him, she scraped lint or rolled bandages. He would listen to what she told him attentively and respectfully. Sometimes she sent him on some errand. He would return in the afternoon to see if all had been performed to her satisfaction.

With the executive ability which was hers to a great degree, she assumed an easy leadership in the weary household, now an asylum. Each had her duty, and Gabriella ordered. Even her mother marvelled. Mr. Clyde had heard of her broken engagement. All Dunham knew it now, but the talk had been smothered under more important topics. He was profoundly impressed with the girl's efficiency.

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Hers was that strong vitality which, when it does not repel, attracts. It attracted him. Shy, timid, reserved with women, he felt drawn to this magnificent young girl who could stanch wounds and also cause them! For if Mr. Clyde's wound was not so deep as a well, it was enough. He felt it bleeding under his left rib. As the mill-hands departed, convalescing, cured or on their biers, he watched her. Circumstances hastened the avowals of his strange wooing.

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CHAPTER VII

MRS. CRANE called on her old friend Mrs. Dunham, and was received in the dining-room, the only vacant spot. She had heard many contrary accounts of the difficulty which had fallen on the house of Dunham. She came for two reasons—to ask questions and to offer help. The questions were soon disposed of. Mrs. Dunham gave her a brief epitome of the situation. The help was a proposition that before her son Baldwin should go to Manila in the spring, he should make the fair Ringletta her daughter-in-law.

"He has long loved your Gertrude," said Mrs. Crane, with her small, spiritless smile, "and we, too, are fond of her. When he leaves us, we are childless. A cheerful young creature in our house would be a godsend. She could help me in the household, and Ball, we hope, will not be absent long. The firm will have a branch in

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Boston soon. It is in a flourishing condition. He has an excellent opening. Give us your Gertrude. Bye and bye he will offer her a home of her own."

Mrs. Dunham said her daughter had not confided her sentiments, but if they were what Baldwin hoped, she felt sure Mr. Dunham's consent was gained already. She felt great confidence in Baldwin; she knew him to be a young man of no vices.

"We have tried to instil morality with religion," said Mrs. Crane. "Baldwin has principles."

"Morality is religion," murmured Mrs. Dunham. "Ringletta is an efficient girl. She is very sensible." Thus the housewives crooned over the marketable value of their children. "We had expected," said Mrs. Dunham, looking at Gabriella and sighing—her eldest daughter was sitting at the window hemming a sheet—"we had expected another wedding in our family in the spring, but Providence has ruled it otherwise. Gabriella's heart did not permit her to take a step, the wisdom of which she had long questioned. We had a high regard for Mr.

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Perry, and regret, while we have not tried to influence, her decision." Gabriella stirred upon her stool. "Mr. Dunham's affairs," went on the mother, "are in a bad condition. His losses are incalculable. Our expenses have been heavy. I think the girls will be the first to feel that they must help their father. If women are not wives and mothers," she gazed at Gabriella with a condemning melancholy, "they must be something else. Lydian is a good musician; she will take pupils. Mary must help in the house, if indeed we can keep it, which seems doubtful. I am not so strong to work as once I was. I am getting old. Ringletta married, there remains Gabriella——"

"Gabriella is so accomplished," said Mrs. Crane, politely, "she could find easily a position——"

"As governess. That is what I have thought of," said Mrs. Dunham. "I should prefer she should get scholars here. She speaks French nicely; but the larger salary may be a necessity, hard as the separation would be for me. I never allow my predilections to interfere with duty."

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"Duty is a great word," said Mrs. Crane.

"A greater fact," said Mrs. Dunham.

Gabriella thought of the Earl of Dearborn and his notions of duty; of her visit to Clara Devereux, its pleasures, perils, trials and discomfitures, and asked herself if this dull-eyed nurse wasting her energies in vigils at sickbeds, haplessly hemming sheets and pillow-cases, while her mother made a governess of her, could be the same Gabriella of Mrs. Dennison Fay Prentiss's musicale and of the embroidered shoes!

The governess of antique fiction is as inevitable as the persecuted lovers, the stern parents, the frivolous maiden aunt and the persuasive, pervasive villain. It is possible that the romances of her youth—realism was not yet in vogue—had impressed upon Mrs. Dunham this poetic fantasy. A maiden tall and reserved, clad in gray merino, making havoc of the hearts of the sons of all the houses she entered, appearing at balls suddenly, unbidden, arrayed in skimp muslin, her hair done on a single hairpin, which, at convenient moments, became detached, allowing her *chioma di Berenice* to tumble about her

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feet, carrying everything before her, and finally certain to marry the best *parti* of the season. It may be just possible that her maternal pride rocked itself on these beliefs, but it is more probable that her thought went no further than the wish that the cleverest of her children should come to her father's rescue. She was not worldly. The satisfactions of self-sacrifice which fail to edify unbalanced and undisciplined characters had never failed Mrs. Dunham. Even now, moving among the sufferers, her face wore a certain beatitude. The commendations of her friends were pleasant in her ears. In weighing virtue we should weigh predilection. Mrs. Dunham had a distinct taste for poulticing.

"You are, indeed, a helpmate to your husband," said Mrs. Crane, rising to depart.

Mrs. Dunham's eyes rolled to the ceiling and then were closed. "A wife's place is by her husband's side," she murmured.

Gabriella slaved early and late. She hardly ate or slept. She was cheery with the sick, bringing to their weakness her breezy presence, bright looks and consoling words; but at night

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when she crept into bed and lay awake, staring at the wall, by the side of the slumbering Ringletta, in the small attic room, to which they were now driven, her soul within her raged like a lion caught and caged. "Oh, my God," she would cry out in the darkness, "I can not bear it!" What? The fatigue, the turmoil, the anxieties of the past weeks, their harsh, hard work, their distasteful tasks? Why, no. These kept her alive—were light and air, food for her, drink to her thirsting lips. No; what she dreaded was the insignificance, the obscurity, the weariness of her future. Poverty, grinding routine, Dunham. A tired teacher's place, forcing dullards to a knowledge they were unworthy to possess. The mere thought chilled and killed her. In the tenebræ of night, "Never, never, never!" she would cry aloud, and Ringletta, with pink, moist lips half opened, and sunny curls upon the pillow, would turn and moan and fret and ask if any one had called.

Mrs. Dunham spoke of Mr. Clyde. "He has been our best friend," she said to Gabriella; "an admirable person. Your papa has long respected him. He is not appreciated here for his

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full worth. The young people laugh at his peculiarities. I often wonder why he is so kind to us."

Gabriella bowed her head behind her sheeting. "What a fool mother is," she thought. Then she looked at her worn face, at the crow's feet about her eyes, and remembering where she had found her pleasures, pitied her.

When Mr. Dunham, his wife and eldest daughter were left alone over their tea-table—Ringletta was supping at the Cranes's—Lydian and Mary were sitting with the few remaining operatives—"Philetus Clyde," he said, "has offered to put me on my feet again, but I can not hear of it. The obligation is too great. I should sink under it. It seems extraordinary," he went on ruminating.

Male superiority had not been questioned in those days, and even in thought Gabriella would not have dared accuse her father of obtuseness. "Why, it all lies in the palm of my hand; *how* don't they see!"

That very night Mr. Clyde asked her to be his wife. The youngsters certainly laughed at him. His appearance was peculiar. He was of

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middle height, lank and graceless. He had the eyes and hair and skin of an Indian chief—round red brown eyes and hair worn long, black, straight, on either side of his thin cheeks. But if his colouring was Indian, his aspect was not ferocious. It was most mild and held a theological suggestion. He resembled a country parson more than an aboriginal savage. He had large, heavy hands, forever in the way, and ungainly feet. He always dressed with scrupulous neatness in black broadcloth, with a white necktie. His health was excellent, and he walked with an agile, springing step. But it was not the effortless spring of youth, but a somewhat jerky counterfeit. This simulation of a youthful tread was certainly unconscious, for Mr. Clyde was incapable of the minutest insincerity. There were those who said he had been born old, had always looked the same—awkward and dry. At his age Dearborn would still retain all his winsome, incorrigible fascinations—would still be that strange mixture of naturalness and address, of folly and of talent, which marked his early years. He would be a dangerous man at seventy, for, if a scamp, he was a skil-

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ful one, and would remain alert, captivating, eloquent, charming to women.

Age is a matter of personality, not of years. Mr. Clyde had at no age been charming. "Are you really ninety years old?" asked one of Fontenelle. "Not I, but my baptismal certificate," he replied, smiling. Hercules was no boy when he spun at Omphale's feet; Henry the Fourth was sixty when he fell madly in love; Antony was middle-aged when he captivated Cleopatra.

At fifty-five Philetus Clyde was an elderly man. Of melancholy temperament, he had always been serious, even in childhood. His origin was humble. He was a plain man even in Dunham, where polished manners, such as Mr. Dunham's and Walter Perry's, were unusual. He could not be called an educated man, but he was not illiterate. Keenly intelligent, he had profited by his brief years of schooling. In Boston, he might be seen sometimes in his great warerooms, in a green baize apron, dusting his pianos himself. They were his children. They had repaid his watchfulness. He was very wealthy.

He called on the very evening that his name

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had been spoken at the tea-table, and it was then, when left for a moment alone with Gabriella, that he told her of his devotion. He was very modest. "I know there is nothing in me to please a beautiful young lady like yourself," he had said. "But if you will give your little hand into my keeping, I will see you do not regret it."

"My hands are not little," said Gabriella, laughing and, womanlike, delaying. She looked down at her slightly roughened fingers.

"They are lost in mine," he said, covering them both in one of his.

"In his eyes I shall be perfect," she thought. She liked his timidity. She felt a sort of protecting sentiment toward him, which continued until death parted them.

"I always have admired you," he went on in a slow monotone, "but you were not free, and I myself had no idea of marriage. Now that my only sister is a widow and has come home to live with mother, I have more liberty. We will live in Boston, if you like, or out here; you can choose. You will wish to go into society. I don't care for it myself, but I shan't make any

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objection. You are to do as you're a mind to. I guess I shan't stand in the way of your pleasures. I have seen you pretty often these months, and I have come to the conclusion that you will make a very fine sort of a wife for any man to get. I have got plenty of money, and I hope you will spend it. You were born to be a queen. I hope the difference in our ages won't stand in my light. I am healthy and strong, and never was sick a day in my life. My family die suddenly. I will never be a burden on you —anyhow, I'll see to that. I have led a pretty clean life; but I don't want to fatigue you talking about myself. It is you I want to talk about." He spoke with no inflections, yet Gabriella guessed rather than heard the undercurrent of intense feeling.

If Dearborn ridiculed her knight of the cloak, what would he say of this one! But Gabriella had learned much since then. This chevalier of *la côte mal taillée* might not be euphuistic; he was assuredly not vulgar—no one is whose egotism is unobtrusive and whose scheme of ethics lies in sympathy.

Then he asked would she marry him.

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Would she not—would she not? It was escape, liberty, hope. She sprang at it.

"Yes," she said, "I will marry you."

He was dazed. He could not speak to her, so choked was he with ecstasy. He held her by the wrist a moment, and covered his eyes with his other hand. "I swear to make you happy," he said hoarsely. "My own happiness seems more than I can believe in."

She stooped suddenly and kissed the fingers which detained her. She felt in so doing as if she had snapped a chain.

"I think," she said, looking up at him, "I would like to live in Boston, if you do not object."

He assured her that the north pole, the equator, Japan or Oregon, the Nile, Ganges or the Amazon—nay, Greenland or Patagonia—all, all, were one to him, were hers; the world was hers, to leave, to take, to have. He wanted to go right in and tell her parents, but Gabriella shook her head. She would rather wait till he had gone.

When, later, she did tell them, there was consternation. Mr. Dunham was of too elevated a

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mind to weigh for a moment his daughter's future in the scale of his own benefit, however the load of his obligations to Mr. Clyde might be lightened if this gentleman became his son-in-law and shoulder to shoulder they could breast the tide, with Gabriella between them. He did not hesitate a moment to point out to her all the disadvantages of the union—the disparity of years, of tastes, habits, ideas. He did not dwell on Mr. Clyde's position as inferior, but only as —different.

Mrs. Dunham, on her part, was strongly opposed. "It is so soon after your other engagement. The world will think you flippant, my daughter."

"What world?" said Gabriella.

"The world we know," said her mother, a trifle impatiently. "Do you love Mr. Clyde?" she asked, incredulous.

"Yes," said Gabriella.

Her mother smothered an ejaculation of amazement. "He has large wealth I am told. Wealth is a great responsibility."

"I will try and bear it," said Gabriella, with mock gravity.

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Her father laughed, and went up to her and pinched her ear. This broke the painful tension a little. "Bless me!" he said, "mamma forgets Gabriella has been to Boston lately and has become a woman of fashion. She has danced at Mrs. Dennison Fay Prentiss's, and hobnobbed with the British aristocracy; and now that she is to make Philetus our son-in-law, you talk to her of the responsibilities of money. Out upon you, mamma! Our little girl has nothing more to learn of us." His satire, begun half merrily, ended in sadness.

"I think it is awful," said Mrs. Dunham, shaking her head. She was not given to levity. Life was becoming too intricate; it always, to her, had been without humour. She went upstairs and put on her cap.

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CHAPTER VIII

SPRING was beginning to bud. Its appeasing breath stirred the willows. Tiny flowers bathed themselves in the hidden stream as it sped swiftly between long grasses. The oblique caress of a white sun touched the wan meadows into colour. The woods smelt sweet. The hard frost-bitten earth about the tree trunks grew dank and soft, melting to verdant mosses. The foot sank into them as in a sponge. In the cemetery the graves of the dead mill-hands were beginning to turn green, and the places that had known them knew them no more.

The mills were working again, the old ones —while the new ones were rebuilding. One could hear once more the whir of the looms, the swash of the waters turning the wheels. Dunham was rising from its ashes. It had dried its tears; the last funeral bell had tolled. The town

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had no time to waste, or its rivals would outgrow it and leave it behind.

A warm, bright morning and clear, a brown bird calling to its mate awoke the brides. Ringletta and Gabriella were married on the same day, with only a few friends to eat their wedding cake and to drink their health in Ellen's cherry wine. There was, of course, other cake and other wine. The "collation" furnished by a Boston caterer was abundant and well served. Mrs. Dunham wore for the occasion a light gray silk and white lace in her hair—she looked with longing at her cap—a diamond brooch, and carried a delicate handkerchief trimmed with *point d'Alençon* between her thumb and index. Mr. Dunham was resplendent in a new coat. The bridesmaids wore dotted muslins over blue, with sashes. Ellen had on her cashmere gown. The house was decked with laurel leaves. Practised, indeed, in malice could have been the eye which should discover a grain of dust from the well-ordered garret to the freshly swept cellar.

The expectations of the small company were belied only in such particulars as had to do with the actors and not with the stage setting of the

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function. They had decided that the shimmering Ringletta would faint; that Baldwin would be, as ever, stalwart and manly; that Mr. Clyde would be incoherent and uncouth, and Gabriella brazen. Her superfluity of naughtiness in the jilting of Walter Perry for a richer suitor did not find favour in Dunham. She was considered a heartless hussy in a community which was a curious mixture of practicality and sentiment. In matters of the heart Dunham demanded that there should be romance. Anything less shocked its prejudice and incurred its disapproval. A certain amount of idealism lies in each one of us. Flowers of fancy may flourish in the most arid soil. To these hard-featured matrons and shrewd-eyed business men Gabriella's action was altogether abominable.

Well, nothing was as they expected. Ball Crane was found to fill the rôle of the average bridegroom. He was jaundiced with terror, loutish, hangdog, dragged his legs, and when he came to the responses, quite unintelligible. There were responses introduced, for the King's Chapel prayer-book, at Gabriella's desire, had been procured. Ringletta, on the contrary,

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looked almost as stately as her sister, and was far more composed. In fact, she displayed diabolical aplomb, and was as unconcerned as if she was in the habit of being married every day of every year. Gabriella, to the surprise of family and friends, was flushed, tremulous and almost tearful, while Mr. Clyde covered himself with glory. His hair had been cut shorter. He wore a suit of clothes which was well made and fitted him. When he took his bride's hand he spoke distinctly, in a deep, resonant tone, full of energy and vigour, as if he really wanted her. Afterward his demeanour was so modest, so genial without joviality, so self-effacing, and yet so dignified, that the neighbours were astonished as well as impressed. His clerical appearance may have suited the forms of religious ceremony. At such a crisis it is just possible that a man's soul may have something more to say than his figure.

In those days, and in the country, the convivial weddings of modern life were unknown. Houses were not crammed with disaffected people who came to criticise and jeer. No one was asked to witness so solemn an office of church

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and state unless closely allied by ties of blood or of affection to the contracting parties. Brides did not drink champagne, sing college songs with their brother's chums, dance till their veils got awry, romp and perspire. Such practices, while innocent, are not becoming; at least, it was not thought so then. The bride was a being set apart. She did not descend to the level of her guests. A certain aureole of reserve, donned with the orange wreath, separated her more surely from rude contact than her white veil. In fact, she seemed a sacred thing, immaculate. If she consented to tread a measure in the dance, it was with a certain loftiness and condescension, as a seraph might stoop earthward for a brief space and take a mortal by the hand.

Ringletta and her lover clambered into a buggy and drove off eastward to pass their honeymoon five miles away. Mr. and Mrs. Clyde went to New York. She looked far handsomer in her dark travelling dress than in her wedding finery, and she was quite herself again and wreathed in smiles. The service had unnerved her, but the reception had amused.

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They took their place in the train which was to convey them to Springfield. She was in excellent spirits, laughing and chatting gayly.

Like all girls who had been at school in a large city, while inhabiting its suburbs, Gabriella knew many persons by sight and by repute, to whom she was unknown. She remembered that a certain couple were to be wedded at Jamaica Plain the same day as herself, and was interested when she saw them enter the car and seat themselves within her visual ray.

The girl was a belle in Boston and a beauty. Her father and mother, reputed ambitious, had not been altogether satisfied with her choice. It had fallen on a young Adonis, a gentleman by birth and lineage, but so ill-provided with this world's goods that for a year or two consent had been denied. They had waited. Finally the spoiled and wilful darling, champing at the bit of custom, had won, with no one knew what ominous threats, the tardy blessing of her parents. To-day priestly voices had sanctioned the bond. Courageously she started to face hardships with the man she had chosen.

Gabriella had often talked with Clara Deve-

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reux of this young pair. Their romantic attachment and rebellion had been the fertile subject of comment in Boston upper circles. She, therefore, looked at the young woman now with a peculiar curiosity—first at her and then at her husband. The girl was attired quietly, but in the latest mode, with a certain jaunty picturesqueness, which had always characterized her. She wore one of those toilettes which, although sombre in colour and severe in cut, manages to startle, or is it the wearer who so arrests the eye and turns the head of the most hurried passer-by? Beauties are rarely half so beautiful as their reputation warrants. Certainly Ringletta Dunham's face was infinitely prettier than this girl's, with whose loveliness Boston, New York, Washington, and Philadelphia had long rung. She was slender and tall, with bright brown hair, ruddy mouth, eyes neither dark nor splendid, of a light-gray green, a trifle cruel, and the irregular piquant physiognomy held something illusive in its charm; but charm there certainly was. Gabriella felt it.

The young husband was indeed beautiful, with the beauty of Hellenic tradition. Gabri-

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ella, who had never seen him before, scanned him narrowly. He was tall as an Apollo, spare as a Mercury. Not an ounce of superfluous flesh marred the ease of his poses—as unconsciously plastic as those of a statue. His thick auburn hair grew low on his forehead, his nose was finely chiselled. His curved lips were red and luscious like some fruits, and showed the splendour of his faultless teeth and of that *animalité honnête* which a contemporary French writer has so happily termed essentially American. He did, in fact, add to these remarkable gifts of physical perfection that national animal honesty made up of good nature, and of the tenderness and gentleness born of an excellent digestion and a cleanly conscience. There was something wholesome about him; wholesome when compared with Dearborn, as is a bunch of May blossoms to the sickly essence tortured from their torn petals.

But what arrested and riveted Gabriella's attention was less the individual graces of the lovers as the intangible atmosphere which seemed to envelop them. Whatever callousness, whatever trouble or hard privation of ex-

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perience might at some future time shatter and break the spell, to-day was theirs. "Love well the hour and let it go," might almost have sufficed where the hour was so rich. Oblivious of surroundings, of prying eyes and watchful comment, they looked at one another and were glad. Their gladness overflowed. Their eyes were glued to one another's faces. Their lips seemed only waiting the idle hour of love to meet in a soft kiss. Now and again his hand sought hers and, furtive, pressed it, and she seemed powerless even in maiden modesty to draw her trembling fingers from his touch. Bye and bye, as Gabriella watched them, she shrank a little, paling. She felt as if about her were some high prison wall of her own building. She could look down on moonlit palaces and fairy gardens, whose flowering walks and starry rivers reflected the clear radiance of northern summer nights, but from whose pleasant path she was forever shut out and debarred.

"Open the window," she said to her husband. "I am stifling."

It is the empty heart that views the love of others with true sympathy. One brimming

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with its own belittles that of others, whose raptures in comparison seem trivial commonplaces. The woman who is herself adored wonders her friend can be satisfied with a love so supine and cold; marvels with Lucian that a man should think himself a god because a one-eyed dame so sees him. She looks upon the vaunted fidelity of the woman as Cleopatra might have looked upon the constancy of Charmian; of the man as apocryphal, not proven, probably ephemeral. One's own transcendent experience dwarfs that of other people.

Mrs. Clyde continued to watch these young creatures with febrile eagerness. She ceased to talk and laugh and, when her husband spoke to her, answered at random. Just for a moment, perhaps the only moment of her life, she understood all she renounced; she saw all that she forfeited. She had not truly loved Walter Perry, and now she would never pluck this flower of Eden poets celebrate, whose perfume, if it harbour poison, is still so sweet. But hers was not a morbid nature. Realism was not the less a fact in those days because literature had not yet named it. Gabriella was a realist. Pos-

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itive by temperament, she cast about her brain to find a spot of vantage on which her tottering self-respect might safely stand.

We all make excuses to ourselves for our base actions, persuading ourselves that their motive holds their pardon. And had her action been quite base? Answer, who dares. Is the blind reaching of inanimate plants after the light reprehensible? Is the animal who swims to save itself blameworthy? The methods of a character will perhaps be weighed in the measure of its needs.

"I did it for papa," thought Gabriella. She thought so at that minute. She had to think it. Was she sincere? Dunham opinion was already divided. There were some persons who insisted that Gabriella was a heroine; that she had sacrificed her inclinations to save her father's credit. Singleness of purpose is obviously difficult. There may have been in this surmise some measure of verity.

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CHAPTER IX

SOCIETY in Boston, we are told, was not governed fifty years ago by wealth, nor did it necessarily open its doors to talent, unless, indeed, the talent was educated—educated at Harvard, not elsewhere. Dartmouth, Bowdoin, and even Yale, were an offence in its nostrils. The savour of orthodoxy which clung about these universities made them distinctly despicable to Boston eyes. Lawyers, poets, philosophers who hailed from them were viewed distrustfully. Compact, self-satisfied, self-absorbed, narrow, impregnable in its sharp provincial exclusiveness, was Boston town.

Into this citadel, vigilantly guarded by tradition on the one side and habit on the other, Mrs. Philetus Clyde had sworn to penetrate. Her wedding tour had extended itself to Europe and over many months. She had taken her husband at his word. She helped him spend his

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money. She returned to the seat of combat with many boxes of fine gowns, wraps, bonnets, lingeries, and with great cases filled with furniture, pictures, statues, hangings, with which to deck the spacious house in Beacon Street which was prepared for her reception. If in these motley purchases some human mistakes had been made, Gabriella's education, on the whole, fitted her to appreciate beauty and art when she should meet them. Although her taste was and remained a trifle barbaric, it was sufficiently cultivated to avoid grievous blunder.

Thus equipped, with a heart beating high with courage, a body vibrating with unspent activity, a will nerved to warfare, she put on her breastplate and grasped her lance. These may have been a Parisian bonnet, a parasol bought on the boulevards. At any rate she armed herself. Is not a lady's dressing-room an armory? It seems strange to us that women who wore mantelets, bavolets and pantalets should have been alluring, yet we are assured that they were so, so powerful is the influence of sex.

Her secret aspirations she confided to her whilom friend and counsellor, Mrs. Charles Dev-

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ereux. She was rather surprised to find that Clara was not exceedingly encouraging. There was even a suggestion on her part that when the helpless took the helpless by the hand there were nasty ditches about. Now, Gabriella felt no ditch to be deep enough nor muddy enough to frighten her. She knew in herself an energy which thrilled at ditches. She meant to leap them. Her nostrils quivered like the hunter's at the steeplechase. She threw up her arms greatly distraught at Mrs. Devereux's supineness.

"In England they give what are called kettledrums."

"Eh, what?" said Clara.

"Drums. Kettledrums. I thought, perhaps, I might have one for our housewarming. It is just tea in the afternoon when one stays at home."

"I don't think it would do at all," said Clara, anxiously. "It would not be understood. They would not like it."

"Who would not like it? I tell you I know. Haven't I just come back from abroad? This is a miserable little town in which we live, my dear Clara, and these big feeds wherever one goes

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are odious. In Paris one is just served with a glass of *sirop*, or of wine, a *patisserie*, and conversation does the rest."

"I think," said Clara, "where economy is no motive, as with you, I'd stick to the collation. Mrs. Dennison Fay Prentiss gave one of those receptions last winter; there was quite a meal served."

"Who's talking of economy? I am considering how to do something new; to revolutionize things."

A look of positive terror crept into Mrs. Devereux's soft eyes. "Well," she repeated again, wagging her head, "I wouldn't."

"What are you afraid of? They can't eat me."

"No," said Clara, "they can't eat you, but they can decline to come to your—kettledrum."

"I am just as well born as any of them. The blood of more than one Pilgrim father beats in these veins," cried Gabriella, dramatically.

"In mine, too," said Clara, with a sigh, "but somehow it don't seem to count."

"I'll make it count. Are not you invited about?"

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"Ye—es," said Clara, dubiously. "You see, Charlie had acquaintances."

"If they are afraid of Mr. Clyde," spiritedly, "they need not be. He wouldn't touch them; he hates society."

"But you can't go alone," said Mrs. Devereux, decidedly.

"And why not, pray?"

"O Gabriella! remember the earl."

It is a privilege of friendship to make itself thus disagreeable. Gabriella blushed. She wondered how much Clara knew of that unpleasant episode. She had never told her all. There are scenes, undoubtedly, which look better sketched than painted; outlined than shaded.

"What has the earl to do with me now?"

"Young women have to be very prudent," said Clara, floundering.

"I feel in me the pluck," said Gabriella, "to snap my fingers in all their faces."

"I would not snap them though," said Clara. She had been delighted at the marriage which would bring her friend to Boston, where she was lonely, but she began now to think that her peaceful fireside might be involved in dangers.

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"Don't you care to go out?"

"Not much any more, as Charles and I are domestic, and the baby coming——"

"Ah?"

"Yes."

"Are you glad?"

"Enchanted."

Mrs. Clyde's attention wandered. "But you used to care, at first, before——"

"Oh, so—so; not much! Married women don't have much fun."

"I don't want to flirt."

"Why, my dear, of course not."

"Well, I don't know. The European women do it frightfully and worse——"

"How wrong of them!"

"I don't know," repeated Gabriella.

"Why, Gella!"

"I suppose they get pleasure out of it."

"I guess they must be unhappy."

"I saw a lot of them in Paris. They looked happy enough. They seemed to rather pity me. I suppose they thought I was having a pretty stupid time driving about, day after day, all alone with Mr. Clyde. What is to repay us for

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being stupid, do you suppose, if society does not? We ought to have—something."

This seemed incontestable. Clara frowned. "One has one's own husband's admiration, and then intellectual pursuits and children."

"Yes, of course," said Gabriella, restlessly. "Of course." She returned to the charge. "What shall we do for the housewarming?"

"Must you have one?"

"What a question! I've got to begin."

"Where is the haste about it?"

"I do it to become acquainted; to make my position."

"It is so difficult," said Clara. How could she tell her that only yesterday Mrs. Dennison Fay Prentiss had met her at the milliner's and had asked her casually if her friend, Miss Dunham, had not married old Clyde, the piano-maker, and if it was their house in Beacon Street where all the huge furniture was going in? Her accent upon the "huge" had been mocking. "What an odd match," she had said, "for that good-looking girl. Where did she pick him up? I see him sometimes in his warerooms when I stop to order a tuner. He seems a very

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respectable old person." The words had been spoken with that patronizing inflection which women know so well how to make cruel. Should she tell her? She dared not. She herself had chafed, for Gabriella was her friend, and she half thought that Mrs. Prentiss's comments vaguely pointed a personal malice; but what revenge was possible, when the lady swept out suavely begging her to drop in some early afternoon.

"She will have to find out for herself," moaned Clara, when she let down her back hair that night to dress for supper.

Mrs. Clyde finally decided to risk no innovations. It was hard to crush her pioneering propensities, but Clara, Mr. Devereux and Mr. Clyde all advised caution, and she unwillingly yielded to their counsels. She probably made a mistake. It is generally wiser to follow one's own instincts when one is clever. It is better to have a successful individuality than to be a poor imitation of some bigger personage. She decided to renounce the kettledrum, which really might have attracted the curious as a novelty, and give an evening musicale. She hired

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excellent talent; she sent for her sister Lydian and sandwiched her between two pianists for a song. She filled her house with flowers. She dispatched cards to Clara's friends and to the sisters of college men she knew, or to such of her schoolmates as were desirable, and to a few, a very few, of Mr. Clyde's business acquaintances. The party was to be small—tentative—one hundred at the most were bidden.

Mrs. Dennison Fay Prentiss headed the list. No answer having come from this lady, she supposed her to be absent, or at least coming; but it may here be stated that she neither answered, came nor called afterward, and that Mrs. Clyde never knew that she had received her card. Years afterward, when Mrs. Prentiss was glad to come to Mrs. Clyde's receptions at Newport or in New York, she sometimes thought she would ask and disconcert her, for then she could afford to embarrass those who had dared to snub her now. But she forgave them all. Mrs. Clyde never nursed rancour where it was inexpedient. In fact, she had no tenacity in resentment. Wounds healed quickly with her and left no scar.

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I say that one hundred were invited. Thirty-five came. The company looked somewhat thin, scattered through the wide rooms. It would have sufficed, however, had not the sexes been mercilessly unequal. There were twenty-six men and only nine ladies, and of these seven were young girls, the other two their mothers. The younger married women whom she had hoped to allure were conspicuously absent. The few who accepted did not come. The men were well enough—a motley assortment. There was a sprinkling of fashion.

Mr. Clyde, with abundant locks and hands, stood about in doorways talking with them. They wandered about examining the paintings and conversing together, dropping to whispers when host or hostess passed them. It is in weighing obstacles that valour is born; in the conquering of them, fortified. Any one who watched Gabriella on that evening, who was not blind or prejudiced, would have perceived her real capacity—a capacity not to be lightly set aside. There was one such observer. He came in quietly just as a shaggy artist, in crumpled trousers, with a picture cord for a cravat, was

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maltreating a sonata of Beethoven's. He leaned against the wall and saw.

If there were only nine women in Mrs. Clyde's halls upon that night, she was not one, or two, or twenty women, but a thousand. She flitted here and there, and everywhere, spoke first to this group, then to that, pervasive, cordial, kind, at ease. She broke this rank and file; consolidated that; ordered another song when song was done; asked Mr. Appleton, a raconteur, to tell a story; begged Miss Lee, who had a taste for acting, to speak a dialogue; sent for an ice for the parched lady on the stairs; uncorked champagne for the thirsty gentlemen in the boudoir. And when at last they all had gone, they said to each other on the sidewalk or in their carriages that, after all, the evening had been agreeably passed and far less dreary than it promised.

When Mr. Clyde, having himself carefully extinguished the candles—early habits of thrift are not easily discarded—and seen to it that the doors were safely locked and barred, sought his young wife in the library, she was still standing where he had left her. She had then been smil-

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ing to speed her last guests—smiling and bowing from under her diamonds, with a lingering good-night for one, a vivacious repartee for another. The fire, which then burned brightly, had fallen low. The room was heavy with its warmth and with the smell of jasmine and of roses. The lights sputtered in their sockets in the Louis Seize candelabra, which Mr. Clyde had bought in Paris. He came up and stood before her.

"I was sorry," he began. A muffled sound aroused him. He looked up at her. He saw that she was weeping. "Never mind, my dear," he said, gently. "Never mind; I think many of the ladies are away now—in New York —perhaps—or travelling—or—Europe." He became somewhat confused, and looked helplessly about.

"It will go off better another time, I am sure, or perhaps," he smiled, "there will be no other time? You have had enough of it?"

She gazed at him with a mixture of contempt and admiration—at his lank person, in its loosely hung dress coat; his high stock, which was a trifle crooked; his large white gloves.

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His kindly eyes had something in them so pathetic that she was stirred to that transient tenderness which we feel for harmless creatures which have been bruised or injured and we would fain protect. She knew her dignity was his, and that the insult which she bore in her heart had pierced his too. She remembered how delicate he was with her, in spite of his ungainliness, and her quick impulse, her sharp insight, her bright intellect, seized, understood and valued that something noble in him, which on his marriage morning had impressed Dunham.

There is a degree of dissimilarity of temperament which precludes clashing. Mr. and Mrs. Clyde were and always remained the best of friends.

"Or will there be no other time?" he had asked her.

"There will be another time," she said slowly, and she felt, if not for herself, then for him.

"Now—directly?" he asked, as if alarmed.

She did not answer, but drawing off her gloves rolled them together carefully, and then brushing by him, went out and up the stairs.

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We have said that there was an observer who had keenly marked every movement every manœuvre in the desperate game the new hostess had played. Beneath the laughing mask she wore, he had caught the anguish in her eye. The trembling of her fingers had been betrayed to him by the irregular beatings of her fan. The unflagging bravery of the performance had filled him with immense respect. This was Philip Remington, prince of good fellows, of diners-out, of bachelors-about-town—unscrupulous of speech, discreet in conduct, a type which women like but never love, withal delightful.

"If that young woman does not get what she wants," he said at luncheon the next day to Mrs. Prentiss, "let the earth swallow us all. My dear madam, make no mistake. Last evening made me her vassal. The fact is this place is too small for her. She will vanish some day into vast space and leave us all star-gazing after her. Thanks; another flapjack, if you please."

"Who *is* he talking about? Will you tell me?" said Mrs. Prentiss to her sister. She

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knew very well. "Is it of that Dunham girl who married Clyde, the piano-maker?"

"It is even of the Dunham girl, who is now Mrs. Clyde, I speak."

"Well!"

"Well?"

"He wears a green baize apron in his shop."

"That apron, Mrs. Prentiss, will not protect him. I would not give a fig-leaf for it. Poor Clyde is doomed to publicity. The die is cast."

"Fie!" said Mrs. Prentiss.

"Why, what have I said?"

"Who was there?"

"I was."

"Oh, you! To be amused, you would play with Satan, if only he would have his tail and horns in curl papers."

"I did not play with Satan. I went to scoff and I remained to pray."

"How are the altars?"

"Monstrous smart; decked with flowers and lighted for sacrifice, only awaiting a high priestess like yourself."

"They will have to wait then. Will you

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try the sudden deaths, or these waterloo cakes? I got the recipe in London. Fay likes them."

"By the way, why was not Fay there? I did not see him."

Fay, who never spoke, grunted and took another cake. Never to speak can not be accounted a serious vice. Fay was one of those exasperating husbands who have every fault, but no vices. Because of this exemption they claim a general absolution for making the lives of others disagreeable and difficult.

"There were men and women."

"That is usual, is it not? Were the Pickmans, Hutchinsons, Wentworths, Dudleys, Gorges, there?"

"Hem—hem, it was a little thin. They did not absolutely flock. Lord, how hateful you women are to one another!"

"One must defend oneself."

"Are sisters of charity kind to each other, I wonder?"

"Why, what have they to fear, will you tell me—out of the world and no men about? Why should not they be kind to each other? It is all

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the fault of men. I was in a car the other day when a scrawny, pale woman got in with, oh, such a pretty baby in her arms! By and bye a girl sat down in the seat next her, a girl—well, I won't go into details—she was very good-looking and very finely dressed; there was not much doubt about what *she* was—how unmistakable it is—and she noticed the baby, and after a while asked very sweetly if she might hold it. Its mother looked at her a moment and then—'No,' she said, 'you shall not touch it.'"

There was an exclamation about the table: "How detestable! How pharisaical! How shocking!"

When she could be heard, "I sympathize," said Mrs. Prentiss, "entirely with the pale woman. Her life was hideous, squalid, wretched. I feel sure her husband beat her. He was certainly unfaithful. I could see it in the droop of her whole person. This girl, who flaunted her plumes, danced all day, battened on the wages others earned, why should she touch the mother's one and only flower, born in what agony, nurtured in what pain! No; let us be

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just. I'd pull down all the asylums for the magdalens and make agreeable places of resort for the tired mothers."

"Well done, thou daughter of Puritanism!" murmured Mr. Remington.

"I'd endow pleasure-grounds and create pensions for the poor, hard-worked women whose husbands are degraded by the vices we coddle."

"Your theories, Mrs. Prentiss, are, unfortunately, not practical," said Mr. Train, who was fond of the cup and not a Galahad.

She had spoken bitterly. There were those who said that in her youth she had loved unwisely one to whom the finding of the San Greal would have been denied; that he had forsaken her, and that she had suffered. However this may have been, a moment's silence fell upon the company, only disturbed by the heavy mastication of the master of the house. He at least was comfortable.

"We have wandered so far from Mrs. Clyde," said Mr. Remington at last, "that I think we will never find her again."

"Not so far, dear Remington," said Mrs.

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Prentiss. "Don't you see we are all dying of jealousy, since you have taken her up?"

"But seriously now, why didn't you go to her party?" asked Remington.

"I am giving up society," she said, making a face at him.

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CHAPTER X

MRS. DENNISON FAY PRENTISS'S allusion to the green apron might have been omitted. Mrs. Clyde commanded its suppression. Mr. Clyde became far more chary of showing himself in his warerooms, at least the retail ones, relegating the duty of receiving orders to his clerks. To please his wife, whom he was beginning to think quite the most wonderful woman in the world, he would have sacrificed many aprons and half of his pianos. As the pianos brought the income, which helped his brilliant bird to preen her plumage, and as Gabriella was eminently judicious, she did not ask their demolition.

She now set about establishing herself solidly. She took a pew in King's Chapel, which had discarded a creed but kept its ritual. She gave a series of musicales, nothing daunted by her first failure. To these she allured such sporadic talent as could be drawn from the rehearsals of

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the music-hall. She subscribed to these and to the concerts. In fact where money could admit her she was always seen—alas!

The men, like the good sheep that they are, jumped the fence and herded to Mrs. Clyde's soirées; and the women, like naughty goats, looked over. But a few went, of course, else she must have closed her doors. Many more would have gone had she chosen to be catholic, but the *pis aller* did not suit her. She accepted rebuff with such amiability as lay in her. Popularity with the gentlemen is a poor letter of introduction to the favour of their women. Possibly the men in this case would have been equal sufferers. Distinguishing attentions to a married woman were so unheard of an offence in those days, so heinous, that ostracism would, no doubt, have been visited on the delinquent. Gabriella guessed these things; but what was she to do? Fortunately for her, however, her success with men lay in a field entirely outside of that of gallantry, nor was there any coquetry in her relations with them. They seemed to find her immensely entertaining. Her house was always agreeable. The topics broached were fertile and

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spicy, her vivacity tireless, and, above all, her personality unique. Men were men in Boston fifty years ago, and liked to be amused.

She dined in the evening to emulate Mrs. Dennison Fay Prentiss, whose perfidy she had not forgotten, although she was ready to condone it. She put her dinner half an hour later, and had two men servants instead of one.

"She will go it one better every time," said Mr. Remington, originating the slang phrase.

Yet, though she lived very well and even luxuriously, she did not propose to appeal to the world through its palate. She dared ask people to a cup of tea, and was the first to curtail the abundance of the banquet. "Congenial people, that is the secret," she said to herself, "and to divert them." She would have liked Sunday evenings, but compromised upon Saturday. Sunday night receptions would have scandalized the town, which closed its doors after the midday meal that its domestics might go out walking, while the children conned the catechism of a Luther or a Channing, or were conveyed to Sunday classes.

These Saturday evenings grew into a certain

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popularity. Men and youths, Cambridge professors, *flâneurs*, artists, now and again a homeless foreigner, to whom nothing better was offered than to sup at Taft's on fish and game, to drive across the long bridge to Parker's tavern, or attend a mediocre theatrical performance, found their way to the Beacon Street abode. Half a dozen clever women—one has to be clever to dare breast the current, still cleverer not to be swamped by it—dropped in, with their husbands or their daughters. There was informal music, and cakes and wine.

Lazy women who will not take the trouble to see to it that their dinner is properly ordered are usually dissatisfied with other people's dinners. None are so mocking at entertainments as those who never entertain. Women incapable of the slightest effort or mental perseverance always belittle what plodding industry accomplishes. It is the workers who are the lenient critics. Indolence, it must be admitted, was not a Boston failing, only to Mrs. Clyde it seemed all work and no result. She wanted result.

"All their spring," she was wont to say, "is wasted hunting moths and mice, in airing cur-

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tains and beating carpets, while all the winter is consumed in preparing for the spring's upheaval." She had always detested household work. She could now leave it to others. Yet her bringing up had taught her the worth of money. She disliked to be cheated. She was not extravagant and, therefore, not popular with the *valetaille*, to whom the ostentation of the spendthrift determines his value.

But in her drawing-rooms she knew how to make men laugh, and even when recounting a wrangle with her cook or footman, she did so with so much nerve and spirit that gaiety was aroused and dulness banished. Mr. Remington, who had come first from curiosity, then from interest, had now become attached to her. He was her constant visitor. He and the few women who had discovered her were loud in her praises.

"They say there is no harm in her at all," said a lady to Mrs. Prentiss—their doors had not yet opened to the newcomer—"that she is not a bit wicked."

"Who ever thought she was wicked?" said Mrs. Prentiss.

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"When men are so delighted with a married woman, I have generally supposed she must be wicked."

"Folderol," said Mrs. Prentiss, who was becoming a little tired of Mrs. Clyde. "She makes them laugh, that is all, and we are a solemn lot, my dear."

"They say she receives very prettily."

"Well, let her," said Mrs. Prentiss, shortly.

"Shall you call upon her?"

"I don't know her."

"Why, Mr. Remington says she came to your ball years ago."

"I believe Charlie Devereux brought her—yes, once when she was a girl. The rooms were crowded. I did not remark her."

"She is very handsome."

"Is she? Poor old Clyde isn't, though."

"They say he really appears wonderfully well."

"Do you expect me to have such a figure-head at my dinner table? Let him stay and dust his pianos, where he belongs. I always thought him a very decent old creature."

To Mr. Remington Mrs. Clyde confided all

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her misadventures with an openness which was enchanting. Toward the Devereuxs she had become reticent, and deceived Clara as to her social triumphs to the stretched limit of this lady's credulity.

"I can't give dinner parties," she said to Remington, "because Mr. Clyde hates them." Their eyes met, and Gabriella stifled a laugh in her cambric handkerchief.

"That is an excellent reason."

"To give," said Gabriella, whose humour could not always dissimulate. She preferred for her husband the looser contact of the soirée, where mockers would observe less closely his unfitness for light pleasantry. "Poor dear," she went on, "my Saturday nights do not bother him much, because he goes at seven o'clock to singing school at the little chapel he supports in Leverett Street, and later plays cribbage with an old uncle who lives at the South End, close to the Deacon house. Why did Mr. Deacon build his French château in the wrong place, I wonder?"

"He had a soul above location."

Mr. Remington always received her revela-

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tions with due heed, remarking now that a philanthropic husband had advantages.

With the self-respect which her native good sense rendered elastic only in extreme cases, Mrs. Clyde never spoke slightingly of her husband. "He is not the least bit a man of the world," she would say, "but he is very able for all that, and a great support to me."

"Every one speaks well of him," said Mr. Remington.

"And that is as I would wish," she answered very charmingly. "He did not have early advantages like my father. I mean, he is not like papa, so fond of books, scholarly."

Mr. Remington had once met her father. He had met everybody.

"Dear papa, had he possessed more ambition, he would have been a senator of the United States by this time, or in the Cabinet, or—or—or—something. He was born to shine, but is too retiring."

"I remember that I admired him," said Mr. Remington, with his infinite tact.

"Who would not?" She turned and fixed him with her dark eyes, which now flashed defi-

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ance. "Why do the women act so? Why do they treat me so? Am I a leper?" She got up and paced the room angrily, with a spot of colour burning on her cheeks and a certain hardness on her mouth, which was the least attractive of her features.

"She has got a temper," thought Remington, and liked her for it. "My dear Mrs. Clyde," he said abruptly, "they are too dull to realize what they lose."

"I think myself that they are short-sighted," she answered, reseating herself by the fire, but uttering the words with an earnestness which brooded purpose.

Her plans of warfare were hampered in the next autumn by finding herself *enceinte.*

Gabriella was wont to say in after years that a woman who has not borne a child knows not the meaning of existence. It is to be supposed, therefore, that the ordeal did not pass over her without significance. However meagre were the fulfilments of her maternal hopes, however small the peace which motherhood brought to her, it nevertheless, undoubtedly, left its mark upon her nature. She always retained *élans* of

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generosity and sincere kindness, which may have been the fruits of this experience. She passed the summer at the Nahant House, where she was practically alone. The other guests did not meet her requisitions. The owners of the neighbouring cottages, intimate among themselves, ignored her.

Her parents came to visit her in Beacon Street at Thanksgiving time. They had far too much sagacity to be overpowered by the prosperity of their daughter, yet were too guileless to perceive that to have everything others want and not what one wants oneself is not attainment. Mr. Dunham enjoyed the library. Mrs. Dunham asked to inspect the storeroom and the linen closet, whose size and convenience she commended. When they said farewell at last and were ensconced in the smart carriage, with its liveried Englishmen and docked horses, which conveyed them to the station—Boston ideas of style lay still in the black-coated Yankee driver and long-tailed nags—they looked at one another and smiled.

"Our Gella will have opportunities for self-culture in the leisure of easy circumstance," said

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Mr. Dunham. "I advised her to do some serious reading in unoccupied hours."

"Philetus makes her a fine husband," said Mrs. Dunham. "It has seemed to me extraordinary she should have preferred him to Walter Perry. Walter's age was more suitable and he was more brilliant, but our affections are providential, and it may be for the best."

"Philetus is an honourable man," said Mr. Dunham. "My obligations to him are incalculable. He came to me in my need."

"He came to us in our dark hour; but you will repay all in time, I trust. Things, I believe, are improving?"

"Yes. It was only a moment's danger he helped me to bridge."

"I must say," said Mrs. Dunham, settling her bonnet, "that as a housekeeper Gabriella is quite up to the mark. Her parlour girl is a good caretaker. I fear her cook is wasteful. I did not like the men servants; they are less neat than girls. I hope she realizes the importance of personal supervision in such a large establishment. I was pleased with the appearance

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of the closets. Her shelves are arranged as I long have desired for myself. She appeared to realize the responsibilities of wealth, and with new duties——" She longed to speak to her husband of the impending grandbaby, but desisted. It would have seemed to her immodest.

Mrs. Clyde's sisters also came to her. She was glad to see her people come and glad to see them go. She enjoyed their presence as we do that of invalids to whom we carefully conceal the storm and stress of life. Dimly she already realized that she and they progressed on different paths. In fact years weakened materially the tie which bound her to her family, and while there never came an open breach, gradually, by tacit consent, intercourse became infrequent. Ringletta's husband grew into a successful man, and they moved into a house of their own in Dunham. Lydian married well, also in Dunham. Mary remained in the old homestead after her mother died, caring for her father, who lived to a ripe old age. Gabriella alone became known in the great outside world.

When Mr. Clyde's little girl was born and

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the tiny pink morsel was laid by the nurse in its father's arms, there was no prouder, happier man in Boston town. He knelt beside his wife's side in chastened gratitude and left a tear upon her hand.

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CHAPTER XI

GABRIELLA and her sister Ringletta had as girls been taken to see a popular actress in the rôle of The Lady of Lyons. They had then and there concluded that Bulwer's heroine was the most alluring of her sex, and that if they ever had a daughter she should be named Pauline. The whim clung to Mrs. Clyde's fancy. She named her baby girl Pauline, to which she added the odd cognomen of de Lyons, pronounced in French. She liked the de. At eight years old Miss Pauline herself concluded that she was a titled personage, to whom peculiar homage was due. But, it may be added, that she was also imbued with the obligations of the *noblesse oblige*. She had a natural courtesy which sometimes astonished her elders. When about that age she learned to play upon the piano a little piece so correctly that her mother often called upon her to give it to the company. On one occasion an-

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other little girl being present had blundered through a waltz, leaving the piano discomfited with her mistakes. Pauline, as usual, was invited to execute her *cheval de bataille*. Contrary to expectation, she acquitted herself with mediocre success. On being reproved by her mamma, who, mortified and vexed, said:

"Why, Pauline, you knew it perfectly. What was the matter with you?"

She whispered in response: "Do not scold me, dear mamma. She played so badly I thought she might cry if I played better."

Mr. Remington, who was present, was greatly impressed by this exquisite form of hospitality, and spoke of it afterward to her mother as of the keynote of a character which would some day make itself felt. Gabriella understood it less well. She was not sure if such unselfishness, such Quixotic abnegation, might not arise from a tendency to self-effacement, which might prove dangerous. She felt that the invisible and weightless harness she meant to adjust upon her colt might yet be found too weighty, and get kicked off. In fact Miss Pauline evinced, even at this tender age, a decided tendency to kicking,

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in which unamiable propensity she was secretly abetted by Mr. Remington and such of Mrs. Clyde's gentlemen friends as were victims of the child's very pronounced fascinations.

That social distinctions were not entirely unappreciated by Pauline was made evident to Mr. Remington one afternoon, when he was the unseen auditor of a one-sided dialogue between Miss Pauline de Lyons and her doll.

"My dear," she was saying to this long-suffering puppet, administering at the same time many taps and raps upon her skull, "I called you Clara Devereux yesterday instead of Rosy, because Aunty Clara is a lady and Rosy is only a nurse, and though that is a pretty name, I must not call you after a nurse. I *like* Rosy, but I am going to change your name *again*. You have not been vaccinated yet, so I can. When little girls haven't been vaccinated their names can be changed. I'll have it done next week. You are now Mrs. Dennison Fay Prentiss, so, miss, sit up and look grand. Your carriage is at the door."

Pauline tossed her yellow mane, and waived this announcement, propping up dolly into a

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standing posture. Mr. Remington pressed forward, and taking the little one in his arms, leaned to her cheek.

"It is not permitted," said Pauline, and gave him her hand to kiss.

It was about this time that the Civil War broke out. Mrs. Clyde found her hopes more than ever dimmed and distanced. She wisely concluded that Europe would be a wider and safer field of action than her own distraught land. She therefore persuaded Mr. Clyde, while these internecine clouds lowered, that their daughter's education required the advantages of music and of foreign tongues, which Italy and France alone could furnish, and that she must travel. It took her exactly eight weeks to decide him. At the expiration of this period he stood with tears rolling down his cheeks at the grimy New York dock, away from which was sailing all that he held most precious. Mrs. Clyde, in a very bright bonnet, fluttered a vigorous handkerchief, while the nurse held up little Pauline against the railing. Long after her golden head and his wife's scarlet turban had disappeared, Mr. Clyde still stood in the cold, drizzling rain, shivering and

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staring. Then, with a sigh, drawing his heavy hand across his wet eyes, he buttoned himself up into his great coat, hailed a cab and went back to Boston.

Mrs. Clyde decided to try Italy. She had letters to the American Minister at Rome. She wished they were addressed to crowned heads, cardinals, the Pope, but finding this impracticable, she had compromised on her own Legation. She managed, however, through untiring activity, to collect before her departure, a certain number of introductory documents for various European capitals. These lay snugly in her largest trunk, between her velvet pelisse and her ermine tippet.

As the good ship ploughed the waves and lunged hither and thither in the trough of the chopping sea, Mrs. Clyde did not weep; indeed, why should she? She was an excellent sailor, and her visage shone and her heart beat high with trust in herself and belief in destiny. It was this consecutiveness in idea which marked her for victory. The wavering ones live only in the hour. Their rare triumphs prove nothing. There are weak beings to whom the sufferings

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they inflict are a million times more cruel than those they themselves must bear. The remembrance of her husband's face, forlorn and desolate, left no tormenting sting in the heart of his valiant spouse. The plenitude of life was enough. She indulged in no graceless reverie, but she did see to it that her little girl was cared for and that the maids did their duty.

Having stopped in Paris to replenish her wardrobe, Mrs. Clyde told her courier to arrange for Italy. She arrived in Rome at the end of March. Lent was well nigh over, and the Easter festivities were drawing nigh.

There was living in those days in Rome an American lady to whom Mrs. Clyde had in vain essayed to bring an introduction. She had somehow failed. International marriages were less an every-day occurrence then than now. This lady had married an Italian prince. The prince had proved a poor investment. He had deserted her, and was now travelling on the Continent with an impoverished countess of similarly nomadic tastes. He had left behind him, however, besides his wife, some solid advantages: an old palazzo in Rome, whose stately grandeur was

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made habitable by her large dowry; a villa in the Apennines, and some family plate and jewels. The abandonment of these material advantages for the chance and peril of a love journey had somewhat re-established him in the minds of the sentimentalists. The conservative element, on the contrary, the moralists, blamed him severely, and thought a man who forsook beauty and innocence and the enjoyment of its income for stinted rations of macaroni and polenta must, indeed be shameless and desperately wicked. The Principessa herself, rather to the surprise of her female acquaintances, who had been wont to listen awed to the details of the Italian husband's perfidies, now assumed a broken-winged attitude, lamenting this new act of treachery with a woe tinged with acrimony.

"I should think it would be almost a relief, my dear," the Minister's wife said when coming to condole. "I believe, by the contract, your money is all settled on yourself."

The Princess had fixed the ambassadress with her large dark eyes, but her lips had parted, exhibiting her white, regular teeth with an almost wolfish fierceness. "It makes me so

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angry when I think of it, I could tear him into shreds."

"But I thought you had learned to hate him?"

"Yes, I hate him."

"Then?"

"I wished him to come in and dine at the table. Was that much to demand of a husband, I ask you?"

"No—but——"

Then she turned and said to the Minister's wife: "If your Theodoric"—Theodoric was the Minister—"walked off with, say, little Nellie's governess, or—your maid—or anything like that, wouldn't you mind? This Countess Porpora is a nobody—mere scuff—not even well-born."

Then the Minister's wife had felt justly annoyed, and answered hotly that her Theodoric had more important pursuits, with a nation's honour on his shoulders, while Italian princes were proverbially idlers and profligates.

The Princess had shaken her head and answered with some sharpness: "Men are men. I believe they are all alike, and a sorry lot they are. I am glad, my dear, you have drawn the

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only prize, but it is always well to be on the alert. I was strangely blind and am now punished." And it was then she had shown her teeth.

The Minister's wife, remembering the details of the Prince's past infidelities, which had been unfolded to her during his stormy married experience, marvelled greatly. She told her lord, in the sanctity of the nuptial chamber, that she feared Aurelia d'Istria was a little "touched" with all her troubles, and she mysteriously laid an ominous finger on her placid brow.

Notwithstanding these occasional outbreaks of outraged human nature, the Princess d'Istria had her quieter moments, and these were devoted to keeping up her position, as she would have styled it.

She was a very lovely woman, of a romantic, dark-eyed personality, tall and elegantly made, and with an unspotted reputation. It had become a fashion to pet and coddle her, and the church, which she had embraced and to which she had generously contributed a great many Yankee ducats, smiled on this new daughter and gave her its benediction and bade her God-speed upon her way. She had become the mode, more

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even than before her husband's escapade. There are persons whose ambitions and whose tastes clash; such was the Princess. Mrs. Clyde's, on the contrary, were the same. The Princess had generally followed her tastes. She did not care for the world, and had avoided it. Now, however, there was a wound to cover. It must be said for her that her honours had always been more conferred than sought after, and she accepted them, if with satisfaction, without elation. The Princess was proud.

"You ought to know her," the Minister had said to Mrs. Clyde when he called informally in response to her effusive missive from Mr. Remington. Gabriella explained that it was a mere accident that she had no letter to the Princess.

"It would be of service to you; she is a power here, but I dare say my wife can manage it."

Mrs. Clyde responded that she sincerely hoped so. But there was not much time to lose, and the Princess d'Istria made no sign—not much time, because after Easter she was to give a great ball, at which all Rome was bidden. Mrs. Clyde knew that her expected hold on Roman

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society was over forever if her own compatriot left her out on this occasion. The Minister had given her a dinner party, but there had only been a few ambulant Americans, and Mrs. Clyde had felt more offended than pleased. The Minister's wife was inclined to put on airs and to enjoy her own importance hugely—an importance which was small enough. Mrs. Clyde's stately apartments in a great palace, where she speedily, deftly and delightfully settled herself, were empty of visitors early or late.

Mrs. Clyde was sadly reflecting on these problems, cursing her Legation and its atrophy one morning, while she and her young daughter were being rapidly driven to the shady alleys of the Villa Borghese. They left their carriage at the gate to saunter in the leafy alleys. Annunziata, Pauline's new Italian nurse, walked close behind them, while, at a more respectful distance followed Giuseppe, the footman, carrying wraps. Gabriella walked with her head thrown back and a step charged with portent. She had come to this reposeful spot to think. Her thought was no flaccid introspection, but rather that of the sibyl, prophetic of augury. Something in the

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force and agility of her movements made an impression upon a languid gentleman who, leaning against a broken column, was smoking a cigarette, looking about him for a sensation. She held her little girl by the hand and followed the path which skirts the road, passing through the Egyptian gateway. She looked down from the artificial ruin upon the private gardens, rested a moment beside the fountain, and finally reached the Casino through shady ways of evergreen and oak. She did not pause in the Atrio to gaze at the reliefs of Claudius's arch or the torso of Pallas, but tripped at once across the salon into the room where Canova's Pauline reclines.

"This Venus was a lady, a princess," she whispered to Pauline, "the sister of a great emperor. She has your name."

"Why has she no clothes on," said Pauline, "if she is a princess? Why does she go naked?"

This remark greatly amused the gentleman, who had been for some time following them, and who was now staring at them through his monocle across the balustrade.

"O daughter of the Pilgrims!" Mrs. Clyde addressed the ambient air and laughed. An-

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other laugh resounded through the hall. It was evident that he understood English. Their eyes met. Hers were full of mischief: his of admiration. Pauline, who preferred painting to sculpture, was dragging Annunziata to look up at Dosso Dossi's Apollo, at Caravaggio's David.

Count Falconieri, Lionello Falconieri, did, in fact, understand English and spoke it fluently. He had passed two or three years at an English school. He was a well-educated follow, a trifle restless, through that drop of Malatesta blood bequeathed to him by an ancestry whose fiefs lay about Fossombrone. They were those colonists of the Forum Sempronii who fought in vain against the Goths and Longobards. He drew, perhaps from their misfortunes, that element of pathos which charms women and those changing moods of temper which seem to hold them in a leash of exceptional suffering and joy. He was beginning to tire of a youth spent in idle dreams, tired of his family's pride, which thought, like Joseph II., that to meet its peers it must descend into Capuchin crypts. He longed amid the dust of centuries for a breath of something fresh and modern, even though it were a little crude. Re-

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ligious through temperament and education, his intellect was pagan, and the absolution of the priest scorched his heart, which he felt had lied. He thought of love constantly, like many young men and all young Latins. His ideals were high ones. He did not view the emergency of Tannhäuser as quite legitimate. Why the Venus or the Elizabeth? Why the wanton or the saint? Grottoes of dalliance or sackcloth and peas in one's shoes? He looked for a woman who should be at once honest and piquant. He was weary of the passionate unreason of the Roman women, their quick surrenderings and daily tyrannies, followed by what tears of remorse and threats of vengeance! His existence seemed to have been reduced to the nutritive life of a plant, such a sameness had fallen upon it. His Greek intellect found him cold in the morning where his Latin fervor had been kindled the night before.

He and Mrs. Clyde, through that "touch of nature," of wholesome laughter, fell into conversation. Some semblance of convention saved the situation. He lent his catalogue to the lady. He begged her to notice the artificiality and

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meanness of the Venus before them as compared with the large and suave serenity of the antique models. He led her on to another room to examine the fine ceiling paintings of Conca, which escape the notice of the average traveller.

Mrs. Clyde was delighted. She enjoyed these wonders of art in the society of this very agreeable man—evidently an aristocrat—and when, later, they found they should meet on the morrow at the "*jour*" of the American Minister's wife, they exchanged names.

He had thought her to be English, he told her, until she spoke Italian to him, which she did with a far prettier accent than her British sisters.

Mrs. Clyde had none of that New England reserve which goes mad or dies but never reveals itself. She seemed frankness and simplicity itself to Lionello, who was sick of mustiness and mystery, *les grands gestes* and their consequences. There was a strength about this young woman which appealed strongly to the weakness of purpose he knew in himself. He told himself that life was heavy devoid of accidents and of sur-

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prises. Mrs. Clyde was both of these. Before they parted he had asked permission to be formally presented to her on the following evening and then to be allowed to call. He patted Pauline's curls. The child gave him her thin fingers, over which he bowed obeisance.

There are persons who seem born to be birds of passage, perpetually migratory and—even when settled in their own cage—on the perch, as it were—invited, never inviting; ever spectators, never participators; recipients, not donors. Mrs. Clyde was not of these. She had the genius of installation. When Count Falconieri called upon her, after their brief meeting and official introduction at the Minister's, he was impressed with the home-like interior she had already created. She, on her part, found his manners admirable. He was not one of those furtive men who approach women as if they feared a breach of promise suit or at best direct entanglement. He had none of this fatuity. He had the leisure of the man of the world who fears no fetters, but rather invites them; who is not bound to hours or seasons, and does not give to society the fæces

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of his exhaustion. The *roturier* has inherited the fateful habit of hurry; his conversation is tinged with the puff and snort of the engine pressing to draw its load of early passengers into the haunts of commerce.

Falconieri's leisure and gallantry were now put at Mrs. Clyde's disposal. Nearly every afternoon he came to ask how he might serve her. When she did not send him on some errand or allow him to escort her on a sight-seeing expedition, he stayed late in her drawing-rooms, while she flitted in and out, received other visitors, wrote letters, read the American papers, with their heart-thrilling tidings of armies and battles and the North's early defeats. She told him many things of that distant country, of which his ignorance greatly amused her.

Mrs. Clyde was not a Cleopatra. She did not make the fatal mistake of turning the prows of her galleys away from Actium. Straight into the haven did she steer on the second visit of her new acquaintance.

"Do you know the Princess d'Istria?" she asked him, with one eye on the servant who was

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bringing in tea, thin slices of bread and butter and a flask of wine.

The twilight was nigh, and they were sitting in her pretty boudoir of the Palazzo Frulini, where she dwelt.

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CHAPTER XII

"WHY, she is my relative," he exclaimed. "Through her husband, of course."

Mrs. Clyde frowned. This was not what she desired. Aurelia d'Istria's husband's harsh relatives might be unfriendly.

Lionello saw the frown. Latins have a quick vision. "I assure you," he said with some warmth, "we are her friends. Andrea—my cousin, that is—is a bad fellow, a scamp do you say? We take her hand, we go to the ball—and you, do you go? But of course—a compatriot."

Mrs. Clyde flushed. "No," she said after a painful pause; "I do not go."

"*Come, che, impossibile!*" cried Lionello, crestfallen.

"You see," said Mrs. Clyde, "I am from Boston—Madame d'Istria is a New Yorker; she doesn't know me; we haven't met."

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"Boston! New York! Are they—enemies?" asked the Count, puzzled. "Is the war—then between Boston and New York?"

Then Mrs. Clyde explained, laughing, that there was no war, "unless, indeed, the Princess d'Istria wants one," she added, with a gleam at him, half merry, half defiant—"in which case——"

He groped for his hat and seized his cane and gloves. "I go at once to see Aurelia. I make all well. To-night you have the card, *che non m'inganno.*"

Mrs. Clyde nonchalantly bade him be seated. "Take a glass of wine first to fortify yourself," she said to him. "Perhaps Madame d'Istria will not be so easily persuaded to ask a woman she has never seen to her party." She would not appear eager though the heavens opened.

The Count drank the wine. She lit a cigarette for him, blowing on it a little with her firm red lips. He seized it with avidity from her outstretched fingers and placed it between his own. But he did not touch her hand; he was too experienced.

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"*Mio* Lionello," said Aurelia d'Istria, as she greeted him, "my lists are closed."

"*Sa, cara cugina,*" he cried, bending before her, "you must then open them again."

He had forced his way in, waving aside the remonstrating majordomo, who insisted that the Principessa was not visible; he had penetrated the very precincts of the lady's dressing-room. As she knew her *peignoir* to be becoming and her hair magnificent, she smiled indulgently at her favourite Roman relative across the *coiffeur*, who was combing it, and her maid, who held the hot irons.

"And, then, I do not know your Mrs. Clyde."

"She is a most accomplished and distinguished American lady; she goes to the Legation."

"Nonsense! I know better. What does the Legation amount to? Some people do manage to pose themselves in spite of their Legation; they have to be clever, for it is generally a handicap. Mrs. Prentiss wrote me all about her; they would not receive her in Boston. She is a country girl who married an old man for his

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money, and she has got no position to boast of anywhere."

"The husband—is he very old?" asked Lionello, interested.

"Not old enough," said Madame d'Istria, smiling, "to have made her a widow, apparently; but I assure you she is nobody in particular."

"What I comprehend not," said Lionello, "is that in a great republic like yours, where rank and titles are not regarded——"

"Do say at once," cried Aurelia, with flashing eyes, "that we are all daughters of immigrants who worked their way across in the steerage and laid stones in the streets on their arrival. If this is what you mean, don't hesitate to say it out; I adore frankness, an unusual trait with you Italians."

"You jest, *ma cousine*," said Falconieri, "I have had the honour of meeting madame your mother." He laughed, displaying a row of regular white teeth under his short dark mustache. "She was very splendid; she looked not like an immigrant such as you describe. You know there have been empresses who—emigrated."

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Aurelia nodded at him mollified. "Very well said, *cugino mio*, but why do you want this person at my soirée? Are you making love to her?"

"As our trysts are attended with the young daughter, her nurse and a *valet de pied* every time, I think so far they are innocent, *cara cugina*."

"I must admit," said Madame d'Istria, "Mrs. Prentiss did not tell me that Mrs. Clyde was fast or improper."

"She is a dragon of virtue," said the Count, laughing, "at least so far as I am concerned, and I think the husband—while he is foolish to allow so handsome a lady to travel unattended—need have no cause for grave anxieties. Does he come soon to take her home, the *marito*, eh?"

"I really know nothing about them. I fancy her quite capable of transporting herself back unescorted from where she came."

"And the invitation—you will not do me this little favour?"

Now Madame d'Istria liked Lionello, probably for exactly the same reasons that many other women did, and she intended that he

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should take a prominent position at her party. She wished the Roman world to know that if her husband had forsaken her his family had not, and that she kept their support and their sympathy. She knew Lionello to be pampered, quick of temper, sometimes capricious as a woman, and she pictured him punishing her for her denial by a sudden departure for his fiefs near Fossombrone on the day of her fête to pass a lonely evening at his castle, sulking away his ill-humour among the silk factories and pretty maidens of Fanno. If he were spoiled, however, she was not ductile. She knew her worth and intended that others should, and she had no idea of throwing wide her exclusive portals to admit all the nomadic Americans who pour their yearly quota into winter cities.

"*Nous verrons*," she said, enigmatic. She made no promise.

"It will be all right," he replied to Mrs. Clyde's inquiry the next morning; "my cousin is to rearrange her lists." Then, fearful of impending perplexities, he added: "It is hardly a ball; only a small affair after all." But Mrs. Clyde knew better.

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She wrote to her husband an affectionate letter: "Count Falconieri is our almost daily visitor; he is devoted to Pauline. If she were a few years older I am sure she would be a countess. You are such a good Yankee, my dear, you would not care for that; you would prefer for her a good American business man. He has some money and large landed estates. I find these foreign gentlemen agreeable, they have such polished manners and are so amiable and amusing. They have more of that talk which is misnamed 'small' than our men—I have always thought myself it required a great deal of education and talent. I won't describe Rome; you have been here; you don't care for a guide-book letter. It is very instructive for Pauline, and the climate is delicious. The Count reads the poets to me sometimes; it is good for my Italian. I never cared much to be read aloud to; it makes me fidgety. He is a cousin, by marriage, of Aurelia d'Istria, who has a great position here. She is just giving a ball; he says he will see that I am asked." She then wrote: "The Romans will, I hope, prove more hospitable than the Bostonians," but she erased the

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phrase. Her husband's delicacy had never permitted him a comment on her social fiasco at home—if indeed he felt it to be such. She did not know. If she had been a queen he could not have taken her success more for granted. She respected this attitude of his, and decided to avoid giving it umbrage. She liked that he should believe that she had arrived. The faith of others in our prowess is at once a defense and an incentive.

After repeated attacks, undertaken with the subtlety and suppleness of a fine tact, Falconieri wrung a tardy card from the Princess. If you don't wish to grant a beggar his alms don't receive him. The Princess had received Falconieri.

Mrs. Clyde had none of that superfluous pride which cripples endeavour and paralyzes attainment. She knew that a late invitation was preferable to none at all, having tested both cases. She also knew that an old maid who has refused a great many offers is still an old maid, and that there are spiteful creatures who, when they don't meet you at a desirable feast, always infer you were not asked. Even an invitation

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framed and hung on a wall has something *louche* about it, and may have been borrowed, stolen or filched. It is better to be seen dancing at the palace. It may be possible that she felt the day was not far distant when she would be quits with those who had been cruel. When it did come it found her generous—or was it wise? There are slights it is best never to acknowledge even to ourselves; they should sink into the oblivion of mistakes.

Well—she got her card! From that night it was all made easy. Falconieri conducted her to supper. She chatted with marquises and dukes, chaffed distinguished prelates, waltzed with princes, was presented to the greatest lady in Rome, the Marchesa Valmontone, who treated her with condescending courtesy.

"How is it possible," she whispered to her companion, "that such an ugly woman, and with no appearance of youth, should be the belle of your society here? Why, in Boston she would be relegated to the dowagers' dais, and herself sat upon as an antiquity."

"When one sits upon such antiques," said the Count, "one should do so with reserve, lest

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they crumble under us and hurl us to the ground and hurt us more than we do them. I will present you to her, and then perhaps your astonishment will cease."

The Marchesa was a very tall, thin woman, with long, sallow cheeks, red hair, which fell over her deeply set yellow eyes, a somewhat heavy nose and a mouth at once sensual and ruthless. She was admirably dressed in black velvet and diamonds. She was viewing the company through her jewelled lorgnette on the arm of the English ambassador. Falconieri stopped her.

When Gabriella had talked to Madame Valmontone for five minutes she felt as one mesmerized; a strange fluid seemed to emanate from the Marchesa's whole person, enveloping, enticing, dangerous. One felt drugged, helpless as in the presence of some influence impossible to understand, combat or escape. There was a perfume about her hair, her handkerchief, her garments, which was unknown, peculiar, faint yet agitating. Her penetrating tones thrilled the heart; the touch of her hot, nervous hand as it detained you shook the senses; the

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deep glance of her curious eyes exerted a sorcery, which at the same moment repelled and fascinated.

"Take me away," sighed Gabriella to Lionello after a short conversation, during which, absorbed in Madame Valmontone's extraordinary personality, she had listened so entranced to the melody of her voice that she had not heard a word the lady had spoken. "Take me away or I shall faint; she stifles me, and I *adore* her." And although later she shook off somewhat the magnetic spell which this woman threw over her, she never could do so entirely.

Falconieri was laughing. "That woman," he said, "thin, yellow, ugly, as you say it, has awakened and still awakens—though as you see she is far from young—the wildest passions. Rome is full of the victims of her compelling charm. I do not know why or how I escaped. She treats me, and always has, as a boy. She did not deign to make me her lover, so I remain her friend. She is thoroughly unprincipled, yet not incapable of nobility—she is a *grande dame* to her finger nails."

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"Tell me more about her. How is she noble?"

"Two years ago her husband was paralyzed. From that hour she has been absolutely devoted to him, nursing him with exemplary fidelity."

"Really faithful, really kind?"

"Yes, really. To her adorers she says, 'If I could have deceived a *jaloux* I can not a *matheureux*. *Voilà*, my friends, you have my last word.'"

"If she ever comes to New England she will be burned for a witch."

This amused Lionello immensely, and eventually it came to the ears of the Marchesa herself.

"*Che volète?*" she said one day to Mrs. Clyde; "they call me the vampire," with an odd archness; "they call me the vampire in Rome here, and I hear you say that in your country they would burn me up for a *sorcière*, eh?"

"Or you would burn us up," Mrs. Clyde had gaily answered. "Some one would surely have to die."

This rejoinder pleased the Marchesa's fancy, and she invited Mrs. Clyde to dinner. The ban-

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quet was a great one, made for the ambassadors and diplomatic corps.

Now, to-night, at Madame d'Istria's ball, she and her cavalier wandered through the great salons, and the Italian was very ardent.

"I would not give your little finger for all the yellow vampires who suck the blood of men. I admire a healthy, strong creature like you. It is like wine to be near you; it warms the soul."

"Oh, dear me!" said Gabriella. But she did not chide him much. It was not her way to rebuke sentimental avowals; she laughed at them or disarmed them with her comical and practical interpretations. "I should like to be dangerous, fascinating, like the Marchesa," she said. "But I could not undertake it; it would be quite thrown away on our fatigued business men and our college boys, which are all Boston produces. Besides which, with us, a married lady has no right to attract at all."

At the thought of Mr. Clyde and the Marchesa possibly meeting, Gabriella was so diverted that she laughed aloud.

"Ah! you laugh at everything," he said ruefully.

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They stopped to speak to their hostess. Gabriella was struck with the contrast of her icy contact with the volcanic breath which enveloped Madame Valmontone; it was like stepping into the glacial clearness of an Autumn night after lingering in the hot nebulæ of a Southern noon. The Marchesa seemed born for a ball-room—her fitting frame. In fact she fitted into a great variety of frames. She appeared created for the homage of men and the envy of women; for the intrigues, stratagems and awards of the world. Aurelia d'Istria, on the contrary, lacked this liquidity. She was scarcely at ease. Faultlessly dressed, there was some hardness of detail, which told of effort, whereas the folds of the Marchesa's velvet gown fell about her as if they had been the carved peplum of a statue. An effort also was perceptible in Madame d'Istria's welcome to her guests. She seemed to say, "It is as incredible to me you should wish to come to my ball as that I should desire to give it." She asked each and all questions, whose answers she did not wait for. Sometimes she spoke quite at random, leaving her guests a little dazed. She appeared like one who has assumed

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a rôle she finds it fatiguing to enact; this fatigue was apparent. Made for domestic joys and fireside affections, she walked alone through her vast drawing-rooms, crowned with the d'Istria jewels, her thoughts far away and a profound ennui in her lovely eyes, so profound, indeed, that at times they filled with tears. She thought herself an excellent actress and imagined she concealed from others her indifference, but in this she was mistaken. It was betrayed upon her face and in her movements, and it chilled them. Nothing is further from true sympathy than its perfunctory expression. Madame d'Istria's suavely spoken words of welcome fell on the ears like a pelting of snowballs, as boreal and as meaningless. When the Marchesa addressed you, whether she cared for you or not, you believed that upon your answer hung her very existence. Your mind was riddled by her amber glance to yield up its secrets without scruple. Thought sprang quickly into birth upon your lips.

When Lionello finally wrapped Gabriella in her mantle and begged to find her at home on the morrow, she felt it had been a good ball.

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She was learning the science of the world; it intoxicated her. She asked herself if any other prizes could be as desirable. She hummed to herself a waltz tune as her women unrobed her, and these commented on her cheerfulness.

At the same hour Aurelia d'Istria was kneeling at her prayers and the Marchesa Valmontone was pacing her room, wringing her hands, passing them through her hair, which she pulled this way and that, until she looked a sorceress indeed. She wept aloud, as she often did, although the source of her tears was unknown to her. She sighed great sighs that heaved her breast and left it arid and dry as did the tears the dark orbits of her eyes. Then she crept in to look at her sleeping lord, whose snores alone woke the stillness of the great palazzo, and to give his valet and nurse some directions for the night. Her son, who was eighteen, occupied one of the palazzo's wings all to himself with his preceptor, the priest who was chaplain to the household.

Yes, Gabriella was learning the world. She thought it very good, so good that she forgot to go and kiss Pauline, and only looked over a

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letter from her husband she found upon her dressing-table. She would read it in the morning.

This letter had been written under conditions which Gabriella never guessed; if she had done so she would indeed have been amused. A Delilah had attempted in her absence to cut off the hair of her Samson, and it was in fleeing from her wiles that the forlorn Philetus had stopped at his club and sent a letter to his spouse in which lurked the contrition of a man who has been attacked and has not yielded.

One day a lady penetrated into Mr. Clyde's private office. How or why she came there, whence or wherefore, it would be hard to say. She announced herself as lately arrived from Chicago and in quest of three grand pianos for herself and her two lately married daughters. There was something unusual about her; even Mr. Clyde, who was not a close observer of female loveliness, saw this at once. It may have been her complexion; it may have been her hair; neither were ordinary. To a man whose sight is beginning to grow dim the aids of art—which fresh young beauties always decry so

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loudly, and even sometimes unjustly accuse their elders of practising—may not be altogether displeasing. Mr. Clyde certainly thought the lady uncommonly good-looking. He bustled about and called his head clerk, and explained to her himself about the instruments and their varieties and prices. She told him she was a widow and musical; she also hinted that she was in affluent circumstances. She came three or four times and wrote him one or two notes. She finally asked him to call at her hotel —she wished to make a final decision about the pianos. There seemed about her a mixture of persistency and hesitancy. To this last summons he did not respond in person; he sent one of his young men. Then it was that the musical widow invaded the sanctities of the house in Beacon Street. She managed to penetrate into Mr. Clyde's library, after making some sort of a scene in the hall. Mr. Clyde could not imagine why she had come; he could only guess when she finally begged him to dine with her that night, and shed a tear over her isolation—and his—adding coolly, "Mrs. Clyde need never know, or I guess she would be jealous."

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"Madam," said Mr. Clyde, sternly, "have you ever seen my wife?"

"Never," simpered the widow, and paid him some compliment, looking in the meanwhile about the premises as if she thought they would exactly suit her views.

"If you had seen Mrs. Clyde," said Pauline's loyal papa, "you would be quite certain that there was no woman living of whom she need be jealous. Good-day to you, madam," and he bowed her out, almost pushing her through the door.

He came back into his library somewhat excited, and feeling peculiarly lonely and unhappy. This was not all that he had expected of married life. He blamed himself for having been frivolous, the poor fellow! He must have been so or this shameless wanton would not have pursued him. His heart overflowed in affection toward his dear wife and beloved little girl. He would send for some of her family to keep him company and protect him, as it were, from such invasions. The woman's presence seemed to have vitiated the air of his home. He opened a window. It was raining. He put on his over-

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coat and went out to his club—a quiet affair where elderly gentlemen dined—and wrote two letters—one was to Ringletta Crane and her husband, asking them to visit him; the other one was to his wife. It was full of love and of tenderness. In the early autumn, God willing, he would come over and see his dear ones, unless, indeed, they should come back to him. Then he wrote of the war, and mentioned that Walter Perry had distinguished himself on the field of battle; that he was in command of a coloured regiment in a post of unusual danger, and had been brevetted colonel upon the field. "If I were young enough," he wrote, "I should shoulder a musket myself; but they don't want old fogies like me, I am too rheumatic. Your sister Ringletta's husband is to form a company; they will be mustered in in a few weeks. I have asked them to visit me before he starts. Your father and mother are well; I saw them last week in Dunham. These are dark days for our poor country. But you read the journals, no doubt. Kiss my daughter; tell her to write to her papa; she has improved in her spelling. Your devoted husband, Philetus."

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"The Jezebel!" he thought to himself later, when he sought his couch and said his prayers with peculiar fervency.

Gabriella never knew, for he would have died rather than tell her. He hoped she did not guess that such dreadful women existed; at any rate, she should never learn through her own husband. It was his business to shield her from all evil. In her present unprotected absence he saw no peril, so ample was his faith in her rectitude and her honour; if it was misplaced, the next chapter will unfold.

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CHAPTER XIII

THE English habit of serving tea at five o'clock was unknown in those days to Americans, but practised at the English ambassador's, where Gabriella—after her appearance at Madame d'Istria's—became a welcome guest. She quickly adopted it. One of the evidences of Mrs. Clyde's social talent lay in her quick acceptation of innovation—she cultivated the receptive mood which marks progress.

The Count often lingered late at these symposiums of Roman idlers, for very soon Mrs. Clyde's drawing-rooms began to fill. Aurelia d'Istria herself could scarcely attract so many agreeable men and women as this unknown American from the borders of the Merrimac. She was equal to any emergency. None knew as well as she how to cajole the powerful, how to shake off the tiresome, how to bait the slippery

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eels of fashion and bend them to her purpose. The women had at first feared her beauty and been vexed at the size of her sapphires, but when they found she did not rob them of their husbands or their lovers, save in the surface commerce of society, which means so little, they found her salon useful as a neutral ground for their own intrigues. She was always good-natured, agreeable, breezy, winked at other people's misdemeanours and foibles, while herself irreproachable. She became extremely popular.

The Count, as I have said, sometimes lingered late and gave Mrs. Clyde a lesson in Italian. Like all the sons of Italy, he was dramatic, he was fond of declamation. This rather bored Gabriella, who preferred chit-chat. Her impatient Americanism rebelled at preparation—she didn't care to watch developments. The stolidity of Anglo-Saxon directness seemed to her more effective. Once, in fact, in the midst of a lyric outburst, she had interrupted Lionello to remind him that she was dining out. He had been offended, and had not appeared for five days. She had missed him; the Count desired to be so missed.

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The season was drawing to its close. He had once said to a friend, "Oh, I so adore preliminaries!" when accused in a former love passage of remaining too long in the sighing stage. But of Mrs. Clyde he never spoke lightly. His vanity was in abeyance. He was seriously enamoured and, more than this, seriously puzzled.

He was enamoured of the beautiful colour in her cheek when she walked with him swiftly through the streets or, at twilight, on the Campagna, while her carriage followed them; of the beat of her positive protestant foot at the altar steps of the Roman churches; of the imperious poise of her pretty head; of her healthy body and her intelligent mind. Her sound, good sense, her sanity, appealed to him as deliciously new and fresh. There was, however, something about her which puzzled him.

The Earl of Dearborn might have fancied Gabriella complaisant; Lionello made no such blunder. The Latin makes fewer such mistakes. He had several times intended to fall at her feet and declare himself, but somehow the right moment never arrived. He told himself that he feared her displeasure, and, manlike, he

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liked her the better for this. Not impulsive, but by nature reflective, he decided that this should be no vulgar *amour;* that this infatuation would require sacrifices. Well, why not? She seemed to him just then worth the highest. He was prudent enough, however, to hope that some of her fortune was settled upon herself, for his own means were somewhat crippled and he feared hardly adequate to supply the lavish luxuries to which the lady was evidently accustomed. Notwithstanding his thrifty Roman eye, the pagan side in him was now uppermost. He would renounce his creed, his family, his titles, his fiefs—all. She could doubtless arrange—these things were quickly done in Protestant countries—to annul her ties to the old American husband—evidently entirely unappreciative and neglectful—and he would marry her! He would become a Lutheran, a Hottentot—anything she wished. He snapped his fingers, madly talked to himself as he smoked innumerable cigarettes in the naked apartment he called his *bibliotéca.*

They would hide their loves at Fossombrone or, if this did not suit the lady of his worship, he would follow her to America, where he could

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give Italian lessons or tan buffalo skins for a living. His nose lengthened somewhat at the remembrance of Pauline, but she was, after all, an *angioletto*, the poor little one; and if the despicable old husband, evidently an unfit guide for childhood, should insist on having her, he would instantly adopt her and give a few more lessons and tan a few more buffaloes. He burned to immolate himself. Gabriella's vitality was infectious. She inspired him with undreamed of courage; he felt such an influence to be above all things beneficial and renovating—all of which shows that the master was, after all, far more ingenuous than his pupil.

One afternoon, consumed by all these hopes and projects, he found Gabriella at last alone. After the usual reading from the poets, tea, which she drank, and wine, which he sipped, were brought in—he could not absorb tea even to please her—he came over and sat close to her feet on a little stool and looked up into her bright face with all the love and longing of his own. Mrs. Clyde seemed in an unusually soft mood—softness was not her salient trait. She had a slight headache, had denied herself to visi-

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tors and was lying back upon her cushions in a lace *robe de chambre* of graceful fashioning. She toyed with the rings upon her fingers. One tall lamp lit the drawing-room, silent, gloomy under the duskiness of its green tapestries. It cast curious lights and shadows on the frescoed ceiling, where one more divined than saw goddesses at play, chasing each other through clouds of sunset tint. Outside the populace was hurrying homeward, fearful of the chill, which falls at evening over the Roman city, and the malarial vapours of the Tiber. The cries of the street venders were almost still, a tolling bell, the clatter of a monk's sandals, the last protest of the polenta seller, the wrangle of two beggars over a copper, alone awoke the pervading silence. The corner where Gabriella sat was sweet with roses, which filled the apartment with fragrance. A slight languor, half drowsiness, half content, stole over Mrs. Clyde. She told herself that it would be pleasant to sit forever thus with this handsome man of the world at her feet. A sense of security, of satisfaction, and something warmer perhaps, more tangible, awoke within her. She looked down into his eyes and smiled,

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and then somehow she blushed, embarrassed in his presence for the first time, she knew not why. She began to thank him, almost effusively, for all he had done for her in Rome. He it was to whom she owed everything. Her Legation, bah! It had hurt more than helped her. The Minister was a weak, ineffectual creature, and his wife a dowdy. She would never have been asked to Madame d'Istria's but for him, and this had been the turning point of fortune.

This mood of gratitude seemed propitious. Lionello possessed himself of her right hand. It was warm and slightly moist. It fluttered and then lay passive for a moment in his own. Emboldened, he raised it to his lips.

"If it be true," he said huskily, "that I have done this small thing for you, even slaves have from their owners some reward of kindness. What will be mine?"

She had withdrawn her hand already. She was sitting up now very upright, with her light garments drawn around her like a panoply of conflict—conflict, in fact, seemed the unwritten canon of poor Mrs. Clyde's existence.

What did he expect of her? The demand

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was abrupt but pertinent. He left her in no doubt.

With his glowing face close to her own he poured forth all the fever of his loving in that persuasive tongue of the "*paése dove il si suona.*" All the lost fervour of the Malatesta and the Falconieri seemed to find voice in the torrent of his words. All that they held of special pleading and hot entreaties, veiled cries of tenderness, fiery protestations, blended in cadences of pathos, piercing as song of nightingale on summer nights. More and more as the man talked, swayed by the masterfulness of his sentiment, out of the confused past surged about and encompassed the woman a motley multitude. Stalwart figures, indistinct at first, but gaining force and power, in sombre shapes, surrounded her; her father and mother, her grandfather and grandmother and theirs and theirs, a goodly number of dames in cap and apron, with chaste demeanour and serious eyes; and men, robust and vigorous, hatchet in hand and wearing shovel hats, with severe lips—and gradually Gabriella Dunham Clyde grew colder and colder, more and more rigid. She looked at the

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young man with distended pupils and defiant arms crossed on her breast.

"How *dare* you!" she at last cried to him. "How *dare* you!" She felt no immediate fear of him as she had of Dearborn, and in fact she need not have done so. Falconieri was a gentleman.

When he got himself out and on the sidewalk he was grateful for this himself, for his impulse had been to strike her—dead.

I am not sure if Falconieri had gone so far as to explain to Gabriella the fate which awaited her should she succumb to his entreaties. I am not sure whether the Count, robbed of his titles and estates and teaching and tanning in some far Western territory, had appalled her. I am willing to believe that she was virtuous. At any rate, her ancestry had conquered his. Yet her exclamation, "What an ass the man must be!" when he had left her, seems to indicate that no measure of his folly had been concealed from her.

If Mr. Clyde felt absolute faith in his wife's safety, her father was less at rest. He looked with some disfavour upon his daughter's expa-

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triation. He wrote to her a few days later: "Your mother and I do not find Philetus looking well. Whatever advantages may accrue to your daughter from European tutelage, we think your first duty, my dear child, is to your good husband. I trust he will join you in the summer and that your absence will not be prolonged." Nevertheless Mrs. Clyde resided four years in Europe. When she returned the war was over, Pauline was twelve years old. She had crossed the ocean twice, however, to see her husband, leaving the child in a convent in Paris, and Mr. Clyde had spent some months abroad.

"I am coming home," she wrote to her old friend, Mr. Remington. "I have done Europe pretty thoroughly. I have been a success nearly everywhere; have met lots of delightful people, and now am ready to settle down. Boston could not hold me any more; I shall try New York."

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CHAPTER XIV

WHEN Pauline was sixteen years old, Mrs. Clyde thought that it was time that she should learn the arts of the salon. There being no Ninon de l'Enclos in New York—the women in Paris, the great ladies, used to take their daughters to Ninon to form their manners—she decided to be herself her daughter's guide. After dinner parties, therefore, Pauline was allowed to come down and sit apart from the company with her embroidery, under a lamp, and listen to, while not joining in, the general conversation. People dined earlier then than now, and from nine until ten o'clock the girl made these brief apparitions in her mother's drawing-room when the latter dined at home informally. The rest of Miss Clyde's day was largely devoted to mental development and bodily exercise. She was an excellent horsewoman, a capital whip, danced admirably, spoke half a dozen foreign tongues

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with ease, and painted the portraits of such of her friends as would sit to her. She was also musical—she could sing a ballad with taste, accompany herself with correctness, if not with dash. She was too timid to do herself justice before strangers. Added to all these gifts and graces Pauline was deeply religious. As she sat with her hated embroidery in her hands, one or two of the more intimate frequenters of her mamma's house—among them Mr. Remington, who now passed two months of every winter in New York—would detach themselves from the group about the fireplace, and seeking out the girl would try to draw her into conversation. She rewarded them with that rare smile which illumined her thoughtful face, like the first flush of dawn; but her talk remained monosyllabic. These wandering gentlemen were more warmly welcomed by a young girl who sometimes sat beside her. This was none other than the daughter of Gabriella's old friend, Mrs. Devereux. Clara, Junior, or little Coy, as she was called, looked to these visits in New York as to a paradise of rapture. When she was there the childish heads were bent together, and the prat-

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tle of the maidens was interluded by smothered titters such as spring lightly from maiden lips. But whereas Pauline was always quick to escape and pleased when ten o'clock struck the moment of release, Coy lingered with laggard step, looking back at the fine company in all its bravery of broadcloth and satin. She was more sympathetic to Mrs. Clyde than her own daughter, and often begged to be allowed to hold the hairpins while the maid dressed her hostess's hair, glad of an excuse to remain within the orbit of festive preparation. This young visitor wore Mrs. Clyde's and Pauline's cast-off dresses, hats and gloves, took drawing lessons with Miss Clyde, while she remained with her, as well as French with the Gallic professor. She hearkened with avidity to Mrs. Clyde's wise counsel as to the opportunities of dowerless girls and the needfulness of energy to bend chance to their purpose. Miss Devereux was not well off. Her father's death had left the family fortunes crippled.

Mrs. Clyde did not encourage the excursions of her guests toward the young friends. "Leave the little girls alone," she would cry

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after the deserters; "come back and entertain us grown-up people; we are dull enough, God knows."

Pauline, however, if she did not mingle much in the general persiflage, listened; she listened and she "read, marked, learned and inwardly digested." She thought about it all afterward, too, for she was eminently reflective. She judged the people who came and went with that astuteness with which inexperienced youth sometimes surprises us. Her judgments were severe—a severity which after years robbed of its implacability. Pauline was not indulgent. It is to be supposed that this part of her education was salutary. Talent, the great German poet tells us, requires for its florescence repose and silence, but character can alone be fructified through human contact.

Pauline was found at this time to be somewhat wilful and obstinate, and there were occasional battles between the mother and the daughter whose victory remained uncertain. To her maternal discomfiture, Gabriella was even sometimes forced to admit herself vanquished. "She has a very strong will," she said once, laughing,

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to Mr. Remington, "and so have I. When we clash, I often find it is I that must yield."

As yet, of course, Pauline was a child, amenable to control and discipline, and her brief spells of sharp rebellion were followed by periods of angelic subservience. No one could be easier to live with when not thwarted.

She was devoted to her father, although she was not much with him. He was generally in Boston, returning to his home in New York, rather jaded, for his Sundays. To the man it seemed hardly possible that this bright and exquisite creature could be his own, flesh of his flesh, marrow of his bones. And what, indeed, could be more different than the quiet old man who haunted the back ways of his domains in carpet slippers and the radiant apparition who sometimes came to invade his solitude? He treated her with an odd mixture of tenderness and of shyness. More grave than merry, Pauline had, through exuberant health, moments of overflowing gaiety. It was in these that, like the whirlwind, she would rush upon her father, give him a great bear-hug of affection, nestle her cheek to his, call him pet names and ask him

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trifling favours or bring him presents worked by her own fair fingers as "surprises." He met these overtures protestingly, saying, "There, my little daughter; there, there! Papa is busy; run away." But she would not go, and half-timidly he would just touch her soft hair with his hand. He idolized her. To her mother's far more demonstrative caresses Pauline never responded. She accepted the kisses and the fondlings with submissiveness, but without enthusiasm. There was between the two a secret antagonism which each vaguely felt, yet would not have acknowledged.

Mr. Clyde's presence in his drawing-rooms was rare. When there, he was usually silent. Of himself he never spoke. This effacement—so unusual in self-made men, so rare in self-made women, to whom this last expression of European polish is unknown—was purely personal. His vanity found aliment, as his industry reward, in the splendour of his women; they represented to him the fruits of his own hardships, the rich embodiment of all his dreams. They were his egoism. Nothing was good enough for them. He revelled and

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warmed himself at their rays like a frozen creature in the sun's. With all his abnegations, Mr. Clyde was oddly enough persistent in one or two matters. His gaunt sister from Dunham was always received at Christmas-time for a fortnight, and it was exacted that her advent should be treated with consideration. Then there were certain charities for which he claimed his wife's voice, purse and patronage. Mrs. Clyde met these demands with fair exactitude. "My husband's family and its claims" lie in the professions of excuse for non-appearance at functions to which one is not bidden, while philanthropy is always modish. Mrs. Clyde recognised that the dignity of a household depends on its unity. She wished her husband to command respect; his inefficacy would have annoyed her.

There could now be no further question as to the fact that Mrs. Clyde had "arrived." Every foreigner of distinction who came to the United States brought her letters of introduction, and every local lion was fêted in her spacious homes. Invitations to her houses, in New York and at Newport, were anxiously desired and prized, and if there was a conservative ele-

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ment which still "remembered" and shrugged its shoulders, it was of too little importance to work her mischief. She had returned from Europe with the prestige of her success—success untinged by breath of scandal. Her first winter in New York had been the most difficult —a last campaign, in which with flying if torn colours she had come out a victor.

New York was then governed by two cliques —that of the already waning Knickerbocker families, well born, well bred, dignified and dull, and that of the less solid, more brilliant moths of fashion, recruited here and there and everywhere, with a drop of foreign blood, a dash of Western prowess, a touch of Southern courtesy, of creole beauty or of New England enterprise. Into this last heterogeneous body certain elements of Dutch ancestry had been absorbed by marriage, so that the links which bound the two coteries, if loose, were not quite snapped.

The Knickerbockers were stolid and scornful, rigid, self-satisfied and had a rather heavy time, while these gayer ones danced over their heads, made merry at their expense and set the town agape with their mad antics. The first

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frowned sternly upon Mrs. Clyde; the second, after a short parley, threw their doors wide open to receive her. But she wanted both, and ever and anon, year by year, she added another name to her fast-growing list—a name distinguished for something else than excellent dinners, unusual pranks and a large income. The American wife of a French general, a man of rank, whose mother's salon was deemed exceptionally elegant and exclusive, had given Mrs. Clyde her hand. They had met at Spa and had become fast friends, but even with so powerful a pilot as Madame la Generale, there were rebuffs. On the night of a large ball Mrs. Clyde had been landed by this lady in an acquaintance's dressing-room. Mr. Remington was waiting for her at the door. As she leaned forward for a moment to smooth a ruffled lock of hair, a small slight lady, whom she knew by sight, in the right of acknowledged leadership pushed to the mirror. Now, Mrs. Clyde, being a militant Christian, held her ground, and then the lady, who proved not only militant but muscular, trampled upon her with her slender heel, using both elbow and foot with energy.

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"I am sorry to have kept you, dear Mr. Remington," said Gabriella, joining her escort in the hall, "but I've just been kicked."

"Kicked——!"

"Yes, so, from behind," and she exemplified the salute she had received, raising her skirt, "and it took me a minute to compose myself."

"A jealous woman, eh? They're dying of it."

"Nonsense," said Mrs. Clyde, who was not silly; "nothing of the sort. Why should a woman younger, prettier, better placed here, than I am be jealous? No, it was sheer wickedness, inexcusable deviltry." Nevertheless, she forgave the kicker later, when she found her useful, and bore her no grudge.

We all, however, are human. She did sometimes make fun of her in genial moments, regretting the dulness of her parties; in more tragic ones deploring that Mrs. T.'s beauty was on the wane, doubtless sapped by some concealed disease—who knew, perhaps a hidden tumour?

Now she said to Mr. Remington: "Some of these women are determined to extinguish

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me, it is a regular cabal; do you think they will succeed?" And then he looked at her voluminous person—she was growing a wee bit stout—at her befeathered head and defiant eye, and told her he did not think she would be easily "extinguished."

"Mrs. Philetus Clyde," shouted the servant, admitting the stately dame into a company which from this hour kicked her no more.

On her occasional visits to Dunham to see her father—her mother had died—Mrs. Clyde would stop and pass a night at Mrs. Devereux's. They then had long talks upon the past, the present and, above all, the future of their only daughters. Mrs. Devereux, for many years a widow, was an old-fashioned one and inconsolable. This rather fatigued Mrs. Clyde, who thought it was high time that Clara should dry her tears. "Really, my dear," she would say, "you must shake yourself up; you can't mope this way all the rest of your life, dipped in ink, and Coy coming on." Then Clara would shake her head and assume a mournful aspect and get out her handkerchief. "I loved my Charlie; I miss him more every hour. I sometimes think,

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Gella, you have never loved." Now, no woman of spirit likes to be informed she has missed any momentous experience, and Mrs. Clyde resented the imputation.

"Folderol, Clara, I have loved just as much as anybody else; what do *you* know about it, pray?"

"Well, now, really, have you, Gella?"

Mrs. Clyde sighed. "There was an Italian gentleman, one of the Falconieri family, a count, perfectly devoted to me in Rome. Had I been free——"

"Well, that is just what you weren't."

"What has that got to do with it?"

"Gabriella!" Mrs. Devereux was shocked.

"Well, it hasn't. One can not control the heart." Mrs. Clyde also produced a pocket handkerchief. "I was attached to that—er—Italian."

"Did he make love to you, a married woman?" asked Mrs. Devereux, with considerable curiosity.

"Yes, my dear, he did, and I confess I was touched. He was the most elegant creature in his manners. Dearborn—O Clara! do you re-

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member Dearborn?—was a noisy clown to him. Well, he made me a declaration."

"What did you have on? Where were you?" Mrs. Devereux's gentle eyes were wide with the woman's craving for detail.

"Oh, nothing——!"

"Why, Gella!"

"I mean no dress, a *peignoir*, a loose thing; I had been ill. Of course I had to turn him right out of the house—the palazzo—I had one near the Princess d'Istria's."

"It does sound fascinating, the whole thing; so you turned the poor Count out? What a life you have had! But of course it was your duty."

"There is no 'of course' about it; everybody can't stay swathed in crape as you do, and be dismal. You ought to take off your veil. In London you would be stoned, with these yards hanging on you. As to the Count, I suppose one of those foreign women would have listened to him fast enough—a man of his rank and great intelligence."

"Well, but Mr. Clyde is alive."

"I came back to him, and that settles the

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matter. He little knows all the sacrifices I have made for him." Then she began to weep. It was about this time that there came to be a simulated emotion in her which demanded sympathy. Mrs. Devereux was not a keen observer, and tears are tears whether artificial or genuine; if these hardly sprang from the depths of some "divine despair" they were at any rate, respectable. She felt quite drawn to her friend, and patted her hands affectionately.

"And how is your sweet Pauline?"

"Very well, thanks. I am glad of Coy's companionship for her; my girl is too *exaltée;* Coy has far more sense."

"Why, I think Coy romantic."

"Not a bit; not like Pauline. Now, for instance, she is religious."

"Are you not glad?"

"Not as she goes on. I took a pew in Grace, everybody goes there—Unitarianism is played out even here; in New York it is quite out of the question—I have become an Episcopalian. But Pauline is so extreme."

"How do you mean?"

"She runs off and goes to St. Albans. Her

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English governess, Miss Stafford, abets her. They are absurd! I caught Pauline going to confession to Father Anselme, a crazy creature who has come over from England. She would not eat a mouthful all of Lent; I have stopped that."

"How odd!"

"It is vexing. She is very pig-headed, like her papa; he looks so meek, Mr. Clyde, but he has got a will of his own, I can tell you, positively mulish; it must come from the de Lyons—men of iron, the de Lyons."

"Why, Gella, what *do* you mean? I thought Pauline was named for Bulwer's play."

"She was, in a way, but Mr. Clyde's ancestors were Huguenots—nobles, and——"

This later discovery was one of those curious assertions which as the years rolled on, Mrs. Clyde made with perfect good faith; it was probable that she herself had learned to believe in the de Lyons. Mrs. Devereux, at any rate, swallowed them, iron wills and all. Mrs. Clyde's visits were stimulating, and even disconsolate widows may pine for diversion.

"I find your Coy a lovely girl. She has the

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best temper, and she is devoted to me. I wish I could say the same for Pauline. She is very quick. She was very angry about my stopping the confessional. The Duchess of Montclair told me she had just the same trouble with her Gladys."

"Lady Gladys St. John! You know her then?"

"We met them on the Riviera. She took a great fancy to Pauline, the duchess, I mean."

"Would you allow Pauline to marry abroad?"

"Oh, perhaps, if a good *parti* offered. I don't wish her to be an old girl; I want to marry her soon and well. But she has got to study two more years."

"Coy will marry herself to some good man, I hope. I would use no influence in matters of the heart." Mrs. Devereux was dazed at all this worldliness; it was frightening. Then she told her friend that Ovid Train, Jr., had distinguished Coy at dancing school with his attentions.

"What, my dear, that young millionaire! Well, you are in luck!—and no parents to make

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themselves unpleasant. You had better not let him slip."

Then Mrs. Devereux insisted deprecatingly that she would not raise a finger to detain him.

Coy had told Pauline of Ovid's infatuation. "It is very silly in him," she had said, giggling.

"Do you mean that little bow-legged thing with the queer head?" said Pauline. "Why, of course you would not look at *him?*"

"He can't help his head," said Coy, without resentment. "His nurse dropped him when he was little."

"Has he any sense?"

Then Coy explained that though her adorer might not be an eagle he was not a fool.

"I could only marry a very superior man," said Pauline, "and very religious. Between me and my husband there must be perfect sympathy; I care nothing for money, do you?"

"Well, I don't know," said Coy.

"It is all dross, vanity, fleeting."

"You see," said Coy, tentatively, "you have always had such a lot."

"I would give it all away to-morrow. I

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shall marry a man I can admire, revere, lean upon."

"You do seem to care for looks, though, Pauline!"

"Not so much, if a man had mind and character. What sort of a fellow is—Ovid?"

"He is very rich."

Pauline waved away his ducats.

"I love beautiful things. Did you notice Mrs. Light's pearls on that pale rose colour the other night when Mr. Remington was teasing us? I was just gazing at her."

"No."

"You never seem to see what they wear. I don't care for things so much in drawers, but I like to put them on myself."

Pauline smiled a far-away smile. "I am afraid you will marry Ovid, head, legs and all."

"Well, then, if I were you I would not speak so about him; you would feel badly."

"Has he a soul?"

Coy had not investigated the young man's soul, but hoped it was all right.

"Soul—that is everything! But here comes Staffey with some tarts. I'll wager she has got

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them hidden away in that paper. She buys tarts and eats them every time she goes out. Here, Staffey dear, share your goodies with us and I will give you some new gloves out of my Christmas money."

Notwithstanding her spiritual proclivities, Miss Clyde devoured two large peach tarts with relish, and smacked her lips over them like one not averse to saccharine inspiration, after which she indulged in a pillow fight with the governess.

When Pauline was eighteen her mamma took her abroad again. She desired to present her at a London drawing-room. On the whole, the girl had been brought up quietly. Her childhood had been serious. She had been hedged in by teachers, governesses and maids of austere demeanour and lynx-eyed vigilance. She was eminently what the French call *bien élevée*. This was to be her first essay, after which she was to be duly introduced at Newport. Mrs. Clyde wished her to have the sanction of the British capital upon her *début*. The ladies had a suite of rooms at a convenient inn

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in a desirable quarter of the city. It was April. The queen had vouchsafed to smile upon her subjects and a few flitting Americans on the following day at twelve o'clock. Mrs. Clyde was exceedingly anxious, for reasons best known to herself, to do credit to her nation on this occasion. No stone had been left unturned, no expense spared. The toilettes were enchanting. The Duchess of Montclair's carriage was to be sent for her—a consummation compassed with what skill and strategy! She felt the harmony of Pauline's whole career hung on this overture. They were trying on their veils, feathers and mantles amid *coiffeurs*, court dressmakers, admiring maids, the hotel housekeeper, an aproned waiter or two and the man who fed the fires. There came a sudden rap at the vestibule door. A blue envelope handed from one to another found its way into Mrs. Clyde's hands. It was directed to Miss Stafford. Miss Stafford was out. Mrs. Clyde turned it over in her fingers once or twice. It was a cablegram. Not overscrupulous when curiosity possessed her, she forced the lightly glued envelope. It opened. She read the contents. Her first impulse was

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to conceal it in her bosom, tear it, hide all traces of it, not to know of it until—until—to-morrow —after—Buckingham Palace. Her next, more worthy, was shame for the impulse. She gave a cry and staggered forward to the sofa. Pauline ran forward and caught her.

"Your papa, your papa!" she gasped. "Oh, your poor papa!" She turned a ghastly face.

When all the people had been hurried out and the finery, she lay on the bed with Pauline beside her, the latter weeping bitterly. By and bye she crept up and to her trunk and herself found—she would have no assistance from the maid—a small, shabby velvet case. She came back to the bed with the thing in her hand. It contained a faded daguerreotype of Mr. Clyde, taken in his early youth before she had ever known him. Why she always carried it with her she could not have told—it was a habit. He had given it to her on their wedding morning. There were the same straight hair, the same resigned and melancholy eyes, but there was youth and its certain sweetness. Youth looking out with its high courage, its hopes, its

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aspirations, its innocence! Mrs. Clyde looked at it and as she looked a film gathered to her eyes. What a god he had been to her! How devoted! how gentle! and he was a strong man and honest. She had had no cause to be ashamed of him. And if ever she had been so, at this moment she made amends. A sudden unexplained anguish wrung her soul. In its flame what was false, base, artificial, was for a moment consumed. Never in all the years had he spoken a harsh or unkind word to her. She put the picture back in its case, closing it with unusual gentleness. Then she held out her empty arms and the two women mingled their tears.

"Your father was an honest man," she said solemnly to Pauline; "always remember it."

"Papa was an angel," sobbed the girl.

After going to his room and to his bed, Mr. Clyde had felt a sensation of mortal cold. He had piled on the blankets, but no heat came, although a fire burned low in his grate. He had rung for his valet, apologizing to the man for disturbing him. He had the dislike, born of his early New England training, of troubling a serv-

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ant. Mrs. Clyde had always said he ruined them, and thus pushed her to double severity. When the doctor came, he already breathed with difficulty. He had a pain in his side. Ringletta Crane and his own sister were telegraphed for. He died the following day in their arms. His sunken eyes wandered about the room, helpless, baffled, as if looking for other faces that were dearer.

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CHAPTER XV

THEIR mourning was brief. One who has not filled us in life can not do so in death. To be "dipped in ink" for any length of time, as Mrs. Clyde had remarked to Mrs. Devereux, was not expedient. And then, after all, death when not poisoned to us by remorse, is one of the gentler sorrows, and so Pauline felt when she remembered her dear father. The passions which destroy and ravage, sin and its consequences, disgrace and its terrors, make more havoc of the heart than the laying away of a beloved friend in the quiet earth. To be afraid of life is a crueler fate. Pauline believed that he was safe.

Et toi, divine mort, ou tout rentre et s'efface,
Accueille tes enfants dans ton sein étoilé.

As to Mrs. Clyde, she was soon cheerful again. As she would have said, "one must shake one's self up." She adopted the English

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fashion, no doubt a wise one, of a short retirement. In a year they were again in London, where she insisted on sending Pauline to a drawing-room, a court ball and a garden fête, charmingly attired in black and white, under the august wing of the Duchess of Montclair. In less than two years she herself, in mauve velvet, was launching her daughter into the maëlstrom of Newport. It was a little soon, but one must overdo or underdo to get on at all.

Mrs. Clyde felt that the inertia of the best things is such that without compulsion they will never move toward us. Drastic measures alone could secure them. Then why hide one's talents in a napkin? Such social genius as hers was no mean gift. Some said that it was God-given; others, that it came straight from the devil. The world, with its usual lack of critical acumen, judged her with stupendous ignorance. But why examine too closely into the sources of benefit? She meant, at any rate, to amuse the world. For what were the marvellous memory which remembered the guests of every dinner and how they should be placed; that quick tact which put people at their ease, soothed ruffled

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vanities, encouraged faltering effort, above all knew unerringly who were born to victory, who to defeat—for what were these things given to her if not for use? And she was kindly, too, with that kindness which is mistaken for warm-heartedness. Could help the climbers, she who had climbed; was not a snob but catholic, imposing on the obdurate those whom she saw fit that they should recognise, while quietly discarding the heavy-weights who brought no beauty or distinction to the feast. She had no patience with that form of pride which, while vaunting its independence, preys upon others. Growing indolent about self-cultivation, she wished art, literature, politics, discussed in her drawing-rooms. She therefore surrounded herself with clever people who learned these things that she might draw from their ideas and be absolved from thinking and reading for herself. There was so little time!

In the Devereux dovecote during these years there had been changes. At eighteen Coy had married Ovid Train. Six months later she was a widow. Always of sickly frame, he had succumbed to an attack of fever. A child in

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years, his wife found herself free and mistress of a large fortune. She was still in her mourning when she came to visit her friends at Newport. There was, however, a certain grace in the cut of her garments; they were elegant in design: and her white fingers were laden with rings. She was a poetic-looking creature in her sombre attire, with round purple eyes, like iris flowers; soft waving hair; a willowy figure, and on her brow the candour of one of Perugino's trumpeting angels. She brought with her her own horses and phaeton and footmen, and, although she affected not to drive in Bellevue Avenue, was frequently seen to cross that inconvenient thoroughfare while seeking quiet alleys. She had been perfectly happy with her Ovid, as, in fact, she would have been with almost any man who did not beat her. Her quiet senses made disgust difficult to her, while a native rectitude made her conscientiously afraid of complication. She was grateful to the hand which gave to her what she most craved—a fitting framework to her loveliness. In this loveliness she had that frank delight which turns the woman into the priestess. Her vanity was so absorbing as to

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become naïve. Whether she impressed others deeply or not was of no moment, so completely was she a heroine unto herself. Luxury, state, etiquette, a retinue of servants, were not with her steps to an end, as in Mrs. Clyde's case, but ends themselves. She rather feared the world, there were so many other women in it! She wished to pose, not to command. Tableau suited her better than drama. The pleasure that she had felt in Mrs. Clyde's dressing-room was in probing how these things were done. I have said that she would have been happy with almost any man—one clause was needful, he must admire her. Love and fidelity were of less consequence; in fact, it was always difficult to understand if Mrs. Train knew evil existed, so deftly could she ignore it. So self-concentred was she in her own performance that that of others was belittled. Had her husband come home to her each night intoxicated, she would not have observed it. Had she surprised him in another woman's arms, she would have smiled away the optical illusion. With all this, she was perfectly amiable, refined, lovable to such as did not look for transport. Mrs. Clyde felt a proper respect

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for a woman who had managed to be a widow at twenty, with a large income and no incumbrances. Had Mrs. Train poisoned her husband's father and mother and then himself and never been discovered, she could not have felt a greater esteem for her skill. The capacity to rid one's self of nuisances seemed to Mrs. Clyde invaluable.

"Of course," she said to Mr. Remington, "she owes everything to me. I dressed her, taught her, turned her out what she is, and young Train had eyes and he was captivated." She did not purpose that Clara should invalidate the claim to gratefulness.

Mrs. Train in her prosperity was not inclined to cavil, and she took these mild reminders with exemplary gentleness. For even to her the debt was once and again hinted at. But Gabriella had to acknowledge the ground on which she had sown seed in this case had been fecund.

It was otherwise with Pauline. Pauline was less malleable; in fact, she was not malleable at all. Ever and anon her mother, in dealing with her, came upon a wall of adamant, an unguessed

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force, a strange tenacity, an exasperating determination, which one might beat against in vain; and in such trivial matters too! Pauline dressed charmingly, but severely. She understood her own type perfectly and disliked picturesqueness. Her mother thought her taste too simple. One evening when she came down into the white gloom of the great hall without a jewel on, and with her hair behind her ears austere in its Greek coil, her mother felt provoked.

"Where is your necklace?" she asked, frowning.

"I don't like it."

"Go upstairs and put it on."

"I would rather not."

"At least put a rose in your hair; you look like Cinderella."

"Cinderella captivated the prince," said the girl with her sudden smile, which showed that Miss Clyde had gauged her mother with perspicuity.

"The princes of fairy tales are not those of modern society. It is ridiculous to adopt this schoolgirl style, a girl of your height."

"Roses in my hair would entirely ruin this

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classic frock. Why, mamma, how can't you see it?"

"I see that you look like a guy, and you shan't budge out of this house. Wait a minute."

The girl sighed and seated herself on an ottoman in the hall where they were still standing, dropping her wrap from her shoulder. Pauline watched her mother ascend the stairs and disappear upon the upper landing. The footman was holding open the great front door, past which gusts blew in from the sea, tossing the lamp-shades hither and thither and waving the branches of the giant palms which lined the antechamber in their Delft pots. The maid was waiting for her young mistress in the vestibule. She was an elderly English woman privileged to this duty of convoy. By and bye, somewhat flushed and rather breathless, Mrs. Clyde returned, holding two large dishevelled artificial roses in her hand.

"I tore them out of my pink silk. They have got a little crushed. Where Martine is, heaven only knows. The instant my back is turned that girl is in the pantry flirting with the

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men; it is not decent. I shall dismiss her. I won't put up one minute more with her impertinence; don't wriggle so; keep quiet;" and Mrs. Clyde proceeded to plant the flowers into her daughter's unwilling head.

Once in the brougham, Miss Clyde lowered the window and, slowly and carefully, so as not to disarrange her locks, pulled out the recreant blossoms. She dropped them into the road.

"Your mamma will be very angry, miss," said the maid. To which Miss Pauline replied by a slight shrug.

She made her courtesy as unruffled as if her mother's wrath did not await her home-coming.

As we have given glimpses of this young lady's mental and moral peculiarities, it is perhaps as well to linger for a moment upon her person, to sketch her *au physique:*

Pauline was tall and finely built, and so far like her mother, but further than this it could not be said of her that she resembled either of her parents; except, indeed, that she had drawn from Mrs. Clyde vigour and health and from her father a certain gravity. While her papa and her mamma were dark, Pauline was of a Saxon,

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or rather, Scandinavian type. Her strong young throat was full and dazzlingly fair, her skin rather creamy than roseate. Her hair had turned from babyhood's spun flax to an ashy hue with streaks of copper in it. Her eyes, of a pale gray, bordered with thick short lashes darker than the hair, had silvery lights in them; they were sometimes iridescent like pearls. In excitement they gloomed into that troubled, indistinct colour which the French call London smoke. Her nose, superbly planted, started with Greek intention but changed its charming mind and at its tip turned slightly, very slightly upward. This gave a touching cast of girlishness to a physiognomy which else had been somewhat severe. The beautiful firm lips were strangely serious. Her hands and feet were longer, narrower, than her mother's, the wrists and ankles slenderer; in fact, the note of grossness in Gabriella's beauty was refined and brought to semi-tones in her young daughter's. Of these attractions Pauline was not unconscious. Eighteen years of constant adoration had done their work. She knew her worth. She carried herself with that pride which lay not

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in what she possessed, but in what she was. She expected homage and meant to have it, but it was to be a tribute to herself and not to her position.

Simple as her taste might seem to her mother's florid fancy, Miss Clyde was luxurious enough. If her outer garments were not redundant of garniture and tinsel, the hidden ones were dainty to extreme. She was fastidious even to painfulness. And she was happy-hearted, full of the joy of robust youth. No brighter image could greet the eye than she presented galloping over the country on her thoroughbred mare Lady Falèse, followed by her breeched and booted groom, with her dog Praxiteles yapping at their heels. Weak and struggling natures turned instinctively to drink at the unspent fountain of her calm strength. Hers was one of those natures to which the vacillating, the erring, the unsuccessful ones of earth cling with passionate hands, crying for succour. Her presence brought it. It was this secret strength, perhaps, which so attracted to her a struggler in life's battle. It seemed, however, if industry and talent count for aught, that

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he would be a vanquisher. His name was Launcelot Trefusis. Like Miss Clyde, an only child, of New England ancestry, he had been less favoured by fortune. He lived with his parents in a rambling colonial house in the old town. His father was an invalid, his mother her husband's nurse. It was a dull home and they were poor. Broken health had wrecked his father's career of usefulness; the son, just leaving the law school of Harvard, had assumed at once the responsibilities of his father's office. He was a lawyer with a growing practice. The world of fashion surged about his parents, but they had left it untried and unsought. The young Harvard graduate, however, had made friends at college and was *persona grata* in certain households. He had little leisure to give to society, but lately he had sought it more, since that afternoon a girl had said to him, "Are you going to Pauline Clyde's coming-out reception? Everybody will go if they have to be carried on a shutter." He remembered that he had received a card. The invitation proved catholicity.

Not on a shutter, but on his own energetic legs, the young man had been conveyed to Nar-

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cissa Villa, through some vagrant impulse; and there had seen the maiden in her white frock, her hands laden with flowers, and had for the first time looked into those eyes in which there lurked for him from that hour such mystery.

Pauline had condescended to accord him fully five minutes of her attention, at which he felt grateful, not elated. The fact is, he was not quite unknown to her. He represented to her one of those interesting books whose pages we have fluttered but not yet perused. She had seen a photograph of him on a friend's mantel-shelf; she had paused before it, contemplative.

"Who is this fellow?" she had asked, after a long survey.

"Don't you know him? He is awfully clever. He went up to Boston for the Bird trial the other day. Papa says his address to the jury was quite wonderful. He is a son of that Mr. Trefusis who had a practice in Rhode Island but was paralyzed, poor thing, or something. He was a chum of my brother Harry's."

This brief epitome of Launcelot Trefusis's career and antecedents was listened to in silence.

"He looks different from the men here."

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"How do you mean?"

"Oh, less vapid, *voilà tout!* He has got nice eyes, hasn't he?"

"Nice! Well, just wait until you see them better," said the girl, enigmatical and blushing.

Pauline changed the conversation. She met those eyes on the day of her formal *début* as they sank into hers with their earnest questionings, and she was once more inclined to think them "nice."

Launcelot Trefusis, or Launce, as his friends called him, was in fact extremely handsome, with his clear olive complexion; his luminous regard; his tall, spare, agile figure; his short, dark, curly hair, and the flash of his enlightening smile—a smile which gave the key to a manly heart: but there was a touch of cynicism about him, not cheap and born of envy, but springing from early struggle, which had forced him to weigh motive and distrust men. He was presented upon this occasion to several magnates: to the Princess d'Istria, who was trailing her *ennui* through the Newport season, with its pallor painted on brow and cheek; to Mrs. Train, who held her court in the boudoir from

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which she insisted that her mourning would not permit her to emerge; and, on the wing, to another "fellow"—to the Viscount Beaumains, who was here in passing on his way to a vague "West." The men shook hands. They lingered near Mrs. Train, who proved equal to retaining them both, with her soft languors. But Trefusis was restless. His eyes wandered continually away to where Pauline and her mother stood, swayed by the crowd, murmuring their welcomings to the inpouring guests.

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CHAPTER XVI

MRS. CLYDE had a large foreign correspondence. One day she received a letter bearing the English postmark, addressed in a handwriting not entirely unfamiliar to her. Where had she before seen this bold chirography? She opened the letter. It ran thus:

"MY DEAR MADAM:

"When you have passed through England I have deeply deplored that I was detained by political and other matters at Beaumains and thus prevented from running up to London to kiss your hand. I remember that hand well—it once boxed my ears, and it did quite right. The years, which have only added to your charms, have sobered me. I now recognise what a ruffian I used to be and must have appeared to you. You are a *grande dame* and therefore born to pardon. I, your humble serv-

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ant, beg for your leniency. Prove it by being kind to my boy, who bears you this. He is going over to the States for six months or twelve. I hope you will like him. Marry him to some lovely American, if you can. Present him, if you will, to your fair daughter, who is, I hear, as beautiful, wise and virtuous as her mother. *Je me prosterne à vos pieds.*

"DEARBORN."

Mrs. Clyde's desk was charged with papers, books and bills. She brushed these now aside with nervous hands. They could wait. She sat pondering over the ambiguous yet clear meanings of this unlooked-for missive. Beaumains! To-day in point of birth, position, ancestry, the first *parti* in England. Now Viscount Beaumains—Earl of Dearborn some day—master of great houses chronicled in history, of peerless lands extolled in verse. She had heard his father was in ill health—the result, no doubt, of his dissipations. Of the son, too, she had heard unpleasant things, but she tried to forget them. Mrs. Clyde had a wide capacity in this direction. Of money there was not much, but Pauline would have enough. What sacrifice would she

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not make of her own income for her only child? What a blast this for her enemies! What a triumph for herself! For even though one bears few rancours, though one prays to be forgiven as one forgives, there is always the exception made of Maria, who really was too nasty; of Josephine, who sinned beyond all patience and can not expect divine indulgence.

Would Pauline lend herself to this new desire, none the less violent because so lately born? She judged her daughter's character too well to believe her absolutely without ambition. She had not been brought up in squalor, she would surely not choose obscurity—it was impossible. She who so looked a queen, could she be made one? or would there be internecine war? And if the girl had ambitions, what were they? At the mere thought that they might not be the same as hers she trembled. "I have sown, all I ask is that she shall reap," she cried to herself in unconscious pathos. Well, she would not invite defeat by undue precipitation; she would play her game warily, using stratagem. To her impulsive character this was not pleasant. She did not always feel at ease in Pauline's company,

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as she did in Coy Train's. Pauline had a way of looking at her searchingly, which made her uncomfortable.

"She is so dreadfully high-toned," she once said, laughing, to Mrs. Train. Gabriella pardoned Coy's artless volubility on the plea that she was one of those foolish talkers who do wise things.

She was sitting at her dressing-table powdering her face after a long, hot drive, and passed the puff to Mrs. Train, who sat beside her in a mull *matinée*, making confidences.

"No," said Mrs. Train, sadly, shaking her pretty head; "no, since my dear Ovid's death I have never powdered my nose, however sunburned, or waved my hair."

"I think you would look much better, then, if you did," said Mrs. Clyde. "I can't see the difference between attention to one's person and getting gowns and wraps from Worth."

Mrs. Train protested that dearest Ovid had liked her to send to Paris for her clothes, and that she did so as a tribute to his memory. If husbands are suppressed in the future revolution of sex, who is to be the scapegoat of vagary?

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Mrs. Clyde had no time to waste in platitude. Continuing her own toilet, she unfolded to this faithful mourner her projects for Pauline. She threw away the powder puff and found sympathy.

Lord Beaumains came to the reception; after this he came frequently. Finally, the last two weeks of his stay at Newport, he was asked to move himself and his valet and his belongings to Narcissa Villa, a suggestion to which he promptly acceded.

Beaumains was a small youth with a thin Roman nose, a lupine mouth and a pasty voice. He lacked the masculinity and sturdiness of the average Englishman; had uncertain eyes with a slight cast in them, so that he never seemed to meet a direct gaze. Notwithstanding these defects, he could nowhere have been mistaken for other than a gentleman. He was well educated, had excellent manners and was devoid of ostentation. His lordly record was not unflecked; in fact, there were some ugly tales about his escapades, which savoured not only of laxity but of vulgarity. It was difficult to believe them when in his company. He was never coarse in word.

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If he despised women, he was courteous to them. If he was too fond of wine, he did not get drunk in public; and when he lost money at cards he paid promptly and was never cross. Mrs. Clyde decided the rumours to be exaggerated.

"Can you believe the stories against him?" she asked, not without some measure of anxiety, of Mrs. Train.

"I never heard any," answered this lady, with her bland, unfailing optimism. Her preconceived opinions of people often forced them to a conscious hypocrisy. It is easier to be what people believe us.

It suited the indolence of her constitution to be confident that everybody was good and contented. This obtuseness hardly deserves the name of charity—it merely never perceives anything which offends. One revenges one's disingenuousness in dealing with such persons by the hugged thought, "Ah, if they only knew me as I am!" and one grows almost proud of turpitude. Her answer at this juncture suited her hostess. It was trenchant and disarmed discussion.

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Pauline treated the English guest with perfect cordiality. She found him passably agreeable. He was devoted to her and to Mrs. Train, joining the young women in their drives, rides and rambles, and Mrs. Clyde, glad of Coy's chaperonage, felt all was progressing as she wished.

"Will she marry her girl to Beaumains?" the Princess d'Istria asked Mr. Remington, raising her lorgnon as Mrs. Clyde passed her on the young man's arm.

He laughed. "I have sometimes imagined that Miss Pauline, who turns everybody's head except her own, will marry herself."

"I married myself," said Madame d'Istria, "and a pretty mess I made of it. After all, our parents know best. Mine warned me, but I would not listen. I was obstinate and am punished."

"Should you advise Beaumains and obedience?"

She shrugged her shoulders. "*On dit* he is a *mauvais sujet*, but who can tell? Harry Dalton made the best of husbands and Harry was larky in his younger years. The girl interests

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me far more than the mother, who is vulgar. She is actually distinguished; it is wonderful."

"Oh! oh! my dear lady, you go too fast. Vulgar is a strong word. I have watched Mrs. Clyde so long now I am like a hen with its chick. Don't be too hard on her. She is worth twenty Paulines, is Gabriella! Look at her now! See her arrange those cotillion chairs for the late comers with one eye on the supper table, one on the British minister, Sir Peveril Lightpace, and one on her English lordship. Do you call that vulgar? I call it divine."

"Oh, she knows how!" said the princess, smiling.

"Is there a more agreeable house in Newport?"

"No," said Madame d'Istria.

Pauline was in such a condition of transcendental happiness in these days that some of her full cup of rapture bubbled over and spilled itself on all who approached her. Beaumains thought her kindness itself. An aureole encircled her; all who came within its rays were illumined. It blinded her mother.

At night when all the lights were out and

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her mother was fast asleep in the big room across the hall, the last servant gone to his rest, the girl would spring from out her bed and with bare white feet run across the carpet to the small ormolu chest, from whose drawers she quickly drew a bundle of letters. With these clasped against her breast she came back to her warm couch, whose broidered draperies and swandown quilt she drew about her. Then, her head propped on the lace pillows, pulling the candle close to her side on the light table where it stood, she read. We will look over her shoulder a moment:

"DEAR MISS CLYDE:

"I passed close to you on the cliff yesterday and you did not give me even a nod. Am I importunate in asking you why? You were walking with Mrs. Train. Ah, you could not have seen me; say that you did not! For there is nothing small about you; you would not willingly wound. Nothing small unless, indeed, it be your tiny ear, your beautiful mouth and the little heel under which you crush my heart.

"Faithfully yours,

"LAUNCELOT TREFUSIS."

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The next began abruptly:

"Ah, I knew you could not willingly hurt me, and to-day when I came you told me you had not seen me. What do you think about so deeply when you walk beside the sea? Some day I will tell you what *I* think of every hour, and all the madness of my thought. Will you wear these alamander flowers in your girdle to-night? I dare not ask for them a place on your fair breast, their creamy hue would suffer in the contact—they are too dark. Yours devotedly,

"L. T."

"Why did you smile at me as you passed me at the dance? You are infinitely cruel. O that you would frown! I wanted you to frown and you smiled, and ever since that smiling I have known torment. Ah! it is much better you should not smile at men if they are to live at all and go into lawyers' dens and wrangle with witnesses and do all the mean and miserable things that slaves must do. Your smile was not even mocking, so that I could be angry, but, oh, such a heavenly ray! Do you know, the very first time that I saw you I felt that to see you

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often would be not only dangerous but culpable —a crime? Why? I know not. I have heard voices more sonorous, powerful and splendid than yours, yet when you sang that little song the evening at Mrs. Heathcote's you can not fancy my sensations. There is something in your voice which frightens me. A delicious fear that clutches the heart with its anguish—it is a sort of curiosity of suffering. I felt I was lost and it was already too late to struggle. You do not sing like some women, with tenderness, with insolence or with passion; you simply sing, that is all; like a bird or a child, but in so doing you become an instrument of fate. Your voice is as peculiar as those silvery eyes of yours. But I would have you lose none of its unconsciousness; I am therefore wrong to tell you all this. But you will not care, not in the least, only—never, never smile on me again—frown. Your slave,

"L. T."

It will be seen that this stylist was not a modern telegrapher in his wooing. Perhaps, for this, peculiarly fitted to appeal to an imagination which Mrs. Clyde called "*exaltée.*"

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There had been a dance at Villa Narcissa. The last guests were driving away. A few indefatigable *débutantes* and boys were taking a last whirl in the ball-room while their tired mammas admonished them from the doors: "Come, Kitty! come, Bella! come, come; it is shockingly late. Mrs. Clyde is patient not to put us all out. Bless me, it will soon be breakfast time."

A girl, all legs, arms and mane, like an unbroken colt, was romping wildly with torn tulle hanging about her flying feet, laughing shrilly, hoydenish, with baby ringlets, sexless, enjoying the exercise. Her partner, not much older, the down of early manhood on his lip, its melancholy in his eyes, a trifle hesitant and timid, tried to warn her heedlessness of her mother's presence and reprimands.

"Let them dance, let them dance," said Mrs. Clyde from the doorway. She would have danced in glee herself with these gay children, so light was her soul.

Beaumains had spoken to her a word that afternoon. Where was he now? And Pauline? She had for some time missed them both. No

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doubt he was declaring to her his devotion. With this hope uppermost, she went to seek them.

Off the hall was a small conservatory fitted up with divans and dimly lit. They must be here. The rest of the house party had wandered into the supper room to devour roast duck and drink champagne. Mrs. Clyde could hear the sound of their distant hilarity. She pushed the heavy portière. Pauline's pure profile shone white against the green background. A man was with her. They did not notice the intruder. She could hear the murmur of their voices. By and bye, growing accustomed to the darkness, she could distinctly see his face, and she detected on it something which startled her. "Why," she thought, "what? he too?" and smiled. Her girl was certainly fascinating. "Dear me," she thought, "how odd! Rather a bore though." Then Pauline's nervous delicacy woke to a sense of espionage. She sighed and moved and turned her face full into the ray of her mother's vision.

"Good God!" Mrs. Clyde almost ejaculated aloud, "she loves him!" For it was unmistak-

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able, the culprit colour, the tremulous mouth, the radiance, the entrancement—it had all been an instant's revelation.

She was upon them. She raised her hand and shaded her eyes, as one would do on emerging from too bright a glare, to focus what little light there lingered here upon the pair. They started at sight of her. She saw it.

"Lord Beaumains," she said, "is that you? It is so dark here."

"It is not Lord Beaumains, mamma," said Pauline, quietly; "it is Mr. Trefusis."

"Oh, Mr. Trefusis, I beg your pardon. You looked so much at home here I took you for one of—the house party, for—for—Beaumains."

"It is your pardon I must beg," said Trefusis in a voice which, in spite of himself, was agitated, "for having intruded, Mrs. Clyde, so late upon your hospitality. I am mortified and you do quite right to rebuke me."

He was on his feet and loomed above the two women among the palms, pallid and tall.

She looked him over insolently. "It is, in fact, very late, and I must really beg you to

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excuse my daughter. She is quite used up for want of sleep, quite pulled, and must be out again to-morrow night."

"Good-evening," he said, bowing low.

"Good-night," said Pauline, holding out her hand with frank cordiality.

He leaned over it an instant, made another obeisance before Mrs. Clyde and was gone.

"So," said Mrs. Clyde, "he is spoony on you, too, Pauline!"

Pauline yawned and stretched out her arms. Her mother watched her.

"Poor thing; rather presumptuous, I should say. He is a nice-looking fellow, however."

Pauline, still silent and not glancing at her mother, walked across the hall and began silently to ascend the stairs.

Trefusis had found his coat and hat and had gone out under the stars. He was strangling. He pulled at his collar and loosened it with a furious jerk. There was no moon; a salt smell penetrated the atmosphere joined to the nearer poignant perfume of heliotrope, narcissus and mignonette. The young man took long strides,

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breathing in the odours of the flowers and of the tides. His brain was on fire, his whole being in a ferment. Weakly he had yielded to that overmastering enchantment which has wrecked before so many just resolves, timid irresolutions. He had heard the gossip of the place. He knew, as others knew, that Beaumains was the favoured aspirant. He felt, as others felt, that she was worthy of a brilliant destiny. What had he to offer? Nothing. While she—the thought that Mrs. Clyde might think him tempted by her fortune cut him like a whip. Her money! Why it was that which kept him from her, which quenched the word upon his tongue, which paralyzed his utterance. "Ah," he thought, "if she were poor and I might claim her! Work for her! How delicious to give her everything, to have this exquisite creature enjoy the fruit of my own toil!" He had not before thought himself capable of so transcendent an emotion. He had been much like other men. He had never supposed that wealth could make a girl inaccessible to him. Why should it? Yet he was glad to-night that, looking in his soul, he could cry out, "Ah, if she only were

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poor!" He had written to her—he had to; he felt that if he could not write to her his heart would break. His youth had been hard enough; it was hard now. Could he not even see a flower that others might touch? But at the thought he shivered. Others? What others? That reptile Beaumains! And now, her mother had dismissed him, insultingly dismissed him. He could never cross their threshold more. Yet she, she, angel of mercy, had for one shy, sweet minute given him her hand. Later, when he had sunk into the sleep of youth, tossing upon his bed, the stars found triumph on his lips, for in his dreams, at least, he was her master.

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CHAPTER XVII

MRS. CLYDE went from room to room, ordering candles and lamps extinguished, seeing to it that the butler closed all the doors and windows, glowering at a footman who was draining the last of the champagne and was a trifle tipsy and jovial. In her tread there was something ominous, which her domestics had learned to dread or laugh at according to their dispositions. It was over half an hour before her hand fell upon her daughter's door-knob. The door was locked. She shook it with no gentle pressure. "Pauline!"

"What is it, mamma?" the voice answered, muffled, from under bed-curtains.

"I wish to speak with you."

"I am in bed, mamma!"

"Get up, then."

"Oh, I do not want to, mamma."

"Very well, then. Good-night, Pauline."

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"Good-night, mamma."

Gabriella went to her room. She had the habit of going in each night to kiss her girl. She had done it ever since the latter's infancy. In that maternal caress whatever disagreement marred the hours of day, whatever misunderstanding lurked between these natures, so closely allied and yet so far apart, was tacitly ignored and buried. They might arise to fresh discussion—that moment always brought its peace and pardon. To-night, that she found her child's door thus locked against her, Mrs. Clyde, after a hurried disrobing and still more hurried prayer, crept under her sheets with a sense of unusual depression.

"It is always so," she thought; "life's best chances come accompanied by something unlooked for and disagreeable, and all pleasure is lost."

She had noticed a light in Beaumains's apartments and a smell of cigarettes had induced in her the impression that her guest was still awake. "The fool!" she thought, "the idiot! smoking my best cigarettes while another man is making love to the woman he wants! I can tell him in

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our country women expect to be won, if in his they drop into men's mouths unasked." She felt an unreasoning vexation at his supineness and would have liked to get up and box his ears for lack of ardour, as she had his father's for superabundance of this quality. "Dearborn at least had some blood in him," she said aloud, addressing the red damask canopy over her head. "The young men nowadays are such puppies." Yes, she felt more annoyed at Beaumains than at Trefusis—because, of course, this last affair was preposterous, a nightmare that dawn must dissipate. By and bye she sank into heavy slumbers. She was still sleeping soundly when her daughter paused for a moment to listen on her threshold. Miss Clyde was in her riding habit. At eight o'clock the sleepy "buttons" had been summoned to his young mistress's room, had been given a note to take into the town. At half-past nine, Pauline was in the saddle. The note, which was addressed to Trefusis, ran thus:

"Meet me at a quarter before ten in Mrs. Gresham's summer-house upon the Cliffs.

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They are away, you know, and I can see you there for a moment undisturbed. I wish to speak with you."

Reaching the Cliffs at a quick canter, she slipped unaided to the ground, threw the reins to the attending groom, picked up her skirt and quickly tripped along the gravel path which hems the sodded banks. Less than five minutes brought her to the Jack Greshams' rustic retreat; less than five seconds told her that he was there. She sank upon the seat beside him, a little breathless. Her riding habit, her whip and buckskin gloves, her high topboots, the derby hat over her low hair, her taut light vest, gave her the aspect of a handsome boy. She seemed robbed of that imperiousness which sometimes awed her lovers. Never had she been more charming, with an appealing charm of innocence and youthfulness.

"Don't think ill of me," she said, overpowered by an embarrassment unusual to her. "I simply could not live another minute without asking you to forgive mamma. I heard you say you were leaving to-day for

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Boston, and before you did so I wanted—I had to——"

She paused helpless, confused.

He came to the rescue. "It was the impulse of a queen," he said.

"Say you forgive her."

The forgiveness of a lover is not always heroic.

"I doubtless deserved my dismissal," he said, "and as I told your mother, it was my province to ask pardon."

She smiled. "Poor mamma!" she said.

They both laughed now in each other's eyes in sheer delight at being so near. She had drawn off her glove.

"What a strong, beautiful thing is your hand!" he said.

Then, with ravishing archness: "Why don't you ask for it?" and she looked up at him, throwing back her head in a proud recklessness.

He seized her wrist. "Ah!" he cried; "if it were *empty!*"

"What! do you really wish me to sell all my possessions and give the proceeds to the poor?"

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said Pauline. "I am so extravagant!" She made a *moue* at him which robbed him of his speech.

"Yes," she went on, hurriedly, "I have been brought up, you know, with great indulgence, but I am not the spoiled creature you believe. I detest the life I am made to live; I dislike the people mamma cares for. They want me to marry Beaumains; it is expected of me; but how can I when I loathe him?"

"Why do you loathe him?" His fingers closed upon her own.

"I loathe him because—because—— Ah!—you know."

She was in his arms now, his shy darling, passive yet trembling. For one brief moment she gave up to him those sweet, grave lips for which he had so longed.

Ah, how he had hungered for this hour! The white sun flashed between them all his glory, holding them in his glittering embrace. The swelling sea broke in sighs at their feet. The honeysuckle waved above them its fragrance, brushing the man's cheek and the girl's forehead with airy festoons. And still they sat

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immovable, lost in the intoxication of their first caress.

He spoke at last. "Pauline," he said, "tell me you know it is yourself I worship and not what others gave you—the curse of the world." He was undoubtedly sincere; he imagined that he loved untrammelled nature and despised artifice; that he hated the prestige of fashion and of belleship which made his dear one valuable to alien eyes. Yet we, who are onlookers and not lovers, wonder, if this splendid flower had been reared in less luxuriant soil; wonder if her habit had been home-made and fitted ill, if her shoes and stockings had been shabby, her hands and nails less daintily cared for, her setting coarser, would she still have appealed to his critical taste? If all these gyves of a civilization he called corrupt had been wanting, would he have been so bound?

"They have extolled me as a beauty and an heiress, I believe," said Pauline, smiling at him, "and ever since I was quite little mamma has dinned into my ears that I ought to be ambitious, that I owe it to myself and to her. Well, in choosing you, dear, I think

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I am, although my friends may think otherwise."

Her ingenuousness in treating acceptance of him as a recognised sacrifice, did not offend him. Indeed, her artlessness in regarding her own position as seriously exalted made her seem more lovely in his eyes. He had often, of course, heard the Clydes derided by less successful aspirants as new and pushing upstarts, and before he had known Pauline would have been the first to join in the laughter at their expense. Now he listened to her guileless prattle in a rapt reverence bordering on awe. Very solemnly then he told her of his past, its disappointments and its pain.

"Ours is but a dull house," he said, "and I have little to offer you except a spotless name, my brain, my heart, my hands; they are not idle or cold, they will slave for you. Let your mother have patience, I will be worthy. My father had a brilliant mind before an accident—he was thrown from his horse—which broke down his health. My mother will admire you. She is not a woman of the world, like yours"—Pauline shrugged away the comparison—"but

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she is a lady in every interpretation of the word. And she is clever."

Then in her turn she poured out to him the story of her guileless girlhood. After she had done:

"Bianca Light blushed when she showed me your photograph. Did you ever have—did you ever care for her the least little bit?" she asked, drawing on her glove with a jerk.

"No, never cared the least little bit for her or anybody before." His brow was, in fact, resplendent with the halo of past asceticism.

"Why did she get red then?"

"It was a way that she had," he said.

"Do you consider her pretty?"

"Pretty! Heavens!"

"There are person who do, but I think her extremely ordinary," said Miss Clyde.

"She is lamentably so."

"As for me, I would have too much pride to get red about a man who had never looked at me."

Silence.

"How did she happen to have your photograph, then?"

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"She got it from her brother, who was in my class at Harvard."

"Ah!"

Pause.

"She must have wanted it extremely—terrifically."

"It only filled up a niche on her mantelshelf; she had all the class."

"How do you know?"

"She mentioned it once."

"When? Lately?" asked the haughty Miss Clyde.

And in his rapture at her questionings and the revelations of their anxiety—"Oh, my beloved!" he cried, "how beautiful you are! You make a god of the man you look at. Trust me entirely, for soul and body I am yours."

When Pauline met her mother in the library, upon her return, it was not without a slight compunction mingled with apprehension. Trefusis had urged her to immediate avowal and had asked permission to call upon Mrs. Clyde at once for her consent and blessing. Pauline de-

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murred, and it had been decided that he should go to Boston for a few days, where an imperative case awaited him, and not press his suit further until some explanation had passed between the mother and the daughter. Pauline was her mother's own child and no coward. Before she could muster up courage enough, however, for the attack, Mrs. Clyde had spoken:

"How late you are! The others have all gone to Mrs. Heathcote's *matinée dansante*. You must get out of your habit at once, take your bath and dress yourself. I shall be ready at one. You had better wear your pink dress; they give us luncheon there. I did not suppose you would ride this morning. I slept late."

"Yes, mamma, but——"

"Before you go up, however, Pauline, I have something to tell you. Perhaps you guess it."

Mrs. Clyde was sitting on the sofa by the window in a loose red wrapper. Her hair was slightly unkempt; it was not yet dressed. She had come down to give orders to her *valetaille*. She picked up a silver paper cutter and rubbed it with her handkerchief. "How untidy James

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is! These silver ornaments look like pewter—as if they had not been cleaned for weeks."

"Tell me quickly, please."

"Beaumains has requested to be allowed to pay you serious court. It is equivalent to asking for you in marriage. I confess I like his methods; they are aboveboard, nothing underhand about them. He comes to me direct, as every man, every gentleman, should."

"He knows you are his friend," said Pauline rather faintly.

"He knows nothing of the kind. You don't suppose I am going to let him think you can be whistled for; that he can open his mouth for you to drop into. I hope you know your worth. If he wants you he must win you, and this I told him."

"You are mistaken then," said Pauline huskily, "for he can not."

"What am I to understand by that?"

"I am already—won."

"Repeat what you said. I can not have heard." Her mother's face blanched.

"I mean that I love another man and I intend to marry him."

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"Without my consent?" Mrs. Clyde's face was white with anger. Pauline remained silent.

"Speak!"

"With your consent, I hope, mamma," she said simply, "since I am sure you want my happiness."

"Happiness! Who is talking about happiness? What do you know of what is best for you? Who is, pray, this conquering hero, this troubadour who has been singing silly madrigals into your ears? Not that sneak, I hope, who was hiding in the conservatory last night!"

Mrs. Clyde had risen and the two women stood confronting each other. A crimson flush overspread Pauline's brow, cheeks and throat. As her mother saw it, even in her wrath she thought, "What a spirit she has, and how handsome!" and she admired her.

"He was not hiding. He is not a sneak and you know it."

"And you dare to tell me that you desire to make that putty-faced beggar my son-in-law!" Rage choked Gabriella now; all prudence was cast to the winds.

"Whom do you mean by 'that putty-faced

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beggar'? Do you mean the Englishman, Beaumains, whom I loathe and detest, whose very presence makes my flesh creep?" It must be conceded that Beaumains's repellent attributes had suddenly grown illimitable.

"Nonsense! You have been pleased enough to drag him about and make a fool of him and of yourself. But I will have no nonsense. Do you hear me? I shall not have you, after all these years of abnegation on my part, make havoc of all my dearest hopes and aims."

Mrs. Clyde felt upon her shoulders at that moment the weight of the vicarious sufferings of the universe. "If you prefer to wallow with the swine it is a mother's duty to save you before you are irrevocably soiled. I shall do so. You will marry Beaumains, and dismiss your skulking adorer."

"How dare you?"

"How dare I! Pretty words from a child to its parent! What is he else? Trying to seduce you like the thief he is, to get at your money!"

Pauline's hands dropped at her side. She had grown livid. "It was because of my money

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he would not speak. It is my money that has kept him silent all these months, and it is for this that you insult him?" she murmured, with all the weariness of a great despair in her low tones.

"Has he not offered himself to you, then?" asked her mother in a mocking voice.

"No," said the girl, raising her head defiantly; "I offered myself to him."

"And your father's daughter can stand there and make such an acknowledgment to me without dying of shame!"

"My father would uphold me; he believed in love."

"Love! And he has talked love to you, has he, and you, like the baby-faced thing that you are, have swallowed every blessed word? The man is a pauper, entirely unknown and obscure, a pettifogging country lawyer who has gulled you at his pleasure."

"Mamma," said the girl, "take care! I am hot-tempered—don't drive me too far."

"You are a selfish, insolent girl, that is what you are. What have I lived for but for you? What was my marriage for, but for my family,

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for my unborn children? Your father was old enough to be mine. Oh, I too had my troubadours . . . but I turned away and sacrificed myself."

"How can you speak so of my father, my dear, dear father?" said Pauline, bursting into tears.

"Oh, cry now; cry, do!" Mrs. Clyde almost shrieked, possessing herself no more. "Make a scene and have the servants about our ears. You have made me sick with your mawkish sentimentality. I will not go to the Heathcotes', nor will you. Go to your room. There I shall join you, and you will write at my dictation a letter to your village bumpkin—miserable cur!"

Pauline advanced upon her mother with something in her face which checked further word and struck a chill to Mrs. Clyde's heart. She had raised her arms, then once again dropped them to her side. Her lips were pale; two scarlet stains burned on her cheeks, on which the tears had suddenly dried. Sometimes, before, Mrs. Clyde, even in earlier years, had surprised in her daughter's quiet eyes a deep and curious scrutiny, which seemed to sift her

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shallow motives, her poor ambitions, and pierce and shrivel them. To-day there was something of this that she saw, and something more which made her shrink a little, like a person sobered from drunkenness by unexpected shock. Her fury fell.

"Why do you look at me so?" she asked, uneasily.

"Mother," said Pauline, "I hate you."

Pauline had one of those violent natures—never irritable—which, when roused, murder. As she went up to her room she kept repeating: "I hate my mother! I hate my mother!" and she felt the joy of emancipation. As with the blasphemer who invoked God to do his worst upon him, giving Him half an hour, the exaltation of a new freedom beat in her veins.

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CHAPTER XVIII

As Pauline was not one of Balzac's cerebral heroines, or one of George Sand's sanguine ones, or even redoubtable and singular like the problematic creatures of Feuillet's moonlit novels, but a healthy American girl with a New England conscience, she did not long remain in the vengeful condition in which we left her. She slept little that night. She became a prey to remorse. Her mother had gone out without her; later, returning, had pleaded a headache and closed her doors except to her maid. Pauline wandered aimlessly about the house, gradually growing more and more disconsolate. At dinner, Mrs. Train—who had now removed herself and her belongings to a cliff cottage but still lived much at Narcissa Villa—did the honours to a few guests. Pauline was silent and *distraite*, but Mrs. Ovid was equal to any emergency and Beaumains was in high good humour.

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It is all very well to hate your mother and tell her so, but the lambkin who has never been weaned still has a yearning after his mammy, and goes bleating about when he finds her not. Although resentment still surged hot within the girl when she recalled her mother's outbursts against Launcelot, and their injustice, she nevertheless felt inclined to make allowance. Too much alike not to comprehend each other, too dissimilar to agree, inseparable *quand même*, with all the ties of mutual support to bind them to each other—the girl asked herself, terrified, what the results would be of an irrevocable quarrel. Now—as we are prone to do when we have been too harsh—she dwelt upon her mother's virtues; her indomitable energy, her forceful will, her absence of foolish personal vanity, her lack of snobbishness which made her often give a helping hand to those whom others jostled, her frugality—Mrs. Clyde ate little and never touched wine—her occasional impulses of generosity, her dignity in her relations with the gentlemen, her devotion to herself—Pauline. It might seem strange that such an inventory should have been made by a daughter of

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a mother. But she had friends whose mothers, nearly as old as hers, were not distinguished for these qualities. "She might have married again. Bianca Light's mother did," she thought. "And how should I have felt? And Bella Payne's mother flirts dreadfully." Then Pauline, being clever, did not belittle her mother's social astuteness. "She is one of the most wonderful of women. Everybody says so. I must not be too stupid to see that. Who has such executive abilities? Who holds such a *salon* as ours to-day? And it is not money. Others have money and don't know how to use it. It is — just mamma. Oh, I have been horrible to her! Poor mamma!" And Pauline knelt and prayed to be absolved.

It was only when she thought of Trefusis that she grew glacial. There her mother's attack had failed; her fatal temper had sealed the verdict. In her allegiance to him Pauline never faltered. She would be his though the earth opened to swallow them both. Her tremulous girl's love had grown in one brief night to woman's passion, and she knew that the only

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worthy acts of life are inspired by love and faith, not by reason.

At eleven o'clock she tapped at her mother's door. Mrs. Clyde was sitting, as was usual at this hour, at her desk. It was a gigantic edifice constructed purposely for holding, in innumerable pigeon-holes and drawers, the various papers, notes and letters of a lady who was at once a social queen and a business woman. She wore the same red gown of the day before, hastily caught about her hips with its silken girdle. Her long hair lay upon her shoulders, her stockingless feet were thrust into a pair of dilapidated slippers. The day held a presage of autumn, and the harsh light from a western window beat through the rich hangings and fell upon Mrs. Clyde's head as she sat immersed in her affairs. Pauline's heart contracted with pity. Her mother's cheeks looked haggard and wan. Her hanging hair, whose graying at the temples a well-trained maid managed skilfully to conceal, gave her aspect an unusual look of age. Her tired eyes, encircled by dark rings, were fastened on the pages of a voluminous letter which fluttered in her hand. She turned sharply.

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"Shut that door," she said; "I am half frozen. I have been up since six o'clock. They have served these law-papers upon me—upon us. I'll be hanged if I understand a word about them. I will turn the tables and have the law on that trustee if it takes my last dollar and yours too. If they think to cheat a widow out of her mite, I will appeal to the protection of the government. The President is a friend of mine. These devils think they can circumvent me, do they? Well, let them come on. I have got more business talent in my little finger than all my agents and lawyers have in their big stupid hulks."

Pauline had not lived eighteen years close to her mother without experience of these swift revulsions and reactions, but to find a person at whose knees you come to crave acquittal from offence entirely oblivious of your crime and steeped in other matters, is, at least, baffling. She murmured that she was very sorry her mother had so much worry, and, trembling, brushed the lady's forehead with her lips. Mrs. Clyde accepted the caress without effusion, but did not repel it. Evidently the terrible words

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which had plunged the girl in misery, if they had weighed and rankled yesterday, this morning were forgotten; other things had displanted them. The love affairs of little girls and their tantrums were of small moment compared with threatened loss of fortune and the pressing cares of financial administration. Pauline stood mute. Trefusis, his claims and hers, Beaumains's pretensions, dwindled and grew indistinct. In the atmosphere of practical concern which pervaded the apartment, she felt her joys and woes to be out of place, insignificant and puerile. Pity wavered for a moment into scorn, then settled into a blank astonishment at her mother's peculiar power. The profound northern nature which suffers years its stifling sorrow silently, looks with contempt and marvel at the Neapolitan who when his friend dies threatens to kill himself, and does not do so only because he is watched, then the third day goes to the play to find distraction. Nevertheless it envies him. Certainly no one that night on seeing Mrs. Clyde coifed, dressed and smiling, receiving a German prince at dinner and later holding a reception in his honour with her fair

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daughter at her side, would have dreamed that she had a crumpled rose-leaf to lie upon.

"*Elle à tout de même le chic pour recevoir,*" sighed the French maid, peering between the balusters as, at the entrance to the larger drawing-room, she could catch sight of her mistress's majestic figure with the gleam of gems which sparkled on her neck and hair. The day had been a hard one to Martine. She had met ill humour, rebuffs and fault-findings, but from the moment that Mrs. Clyde stepped through her hall with nerves steeled, furrows smoothed, cares relaxed, anxieties in leash, Narcissa Villa was at peace.

All the world was there that night, a small world, perhaps, a narrow court, but still cosmopolitan enough, and at which reigned grace, beauty, wealth and all those things which people emulate while still decrying.

Mr. Remington, visiting a yacht at anchor in the harbour that afternoon, tasted his triumph too. Its owner, a gentleman from Boston, entertained on his goodly ship a party of Nahanters, and among them none other than that Mrs. Prentiss who, years before, had

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ignored Gabriella and treated her with rude contumely. An old woman now, *passée*, long left behind, but still, by reason of traditional sovereignty, a power in Boston.

"I suppose I shall see you to-night at Mrs. Philetus Clyde's?" he asked of her.

Then, flushing, Mrs. Prentiss admitted that she had not been bidden, had no card. "Odd, too, that she should leave me out. It must be a mistake. I used to know her. She was at a ball once at my house, years ago."

"Oh, do get us asked, Mr. Remington, that's a dear," cried a young woman; "we are just dying to go on shore to-night. We hear her parties are so delightful, quite the best things there are."

"Mrs. Clyde told me," said Mr. Remington, ruminating as if in doubt, "that her lists were full; but," he added, as if taking heart of grace, "she is always glad to show hospitality. I think"—he turned to Mrs. Prentiss—"I think that I can manage to get your party invited."

"It will be most kind of you," murmured Mrs. Prentiss, meekly. And Gabriella was avenged!

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Like Queen Charlotte's maid of honour, Mrs. Prentiss may have felt that it was hard to give up bags, swords and good breeding for the usurpations of vulgarity, Roundheads and dishabilles; but she had to acknowledge her defeat.

That night Beaumains declared his sentiments in the same place where Trefusis had whispered his. He was dismissed with courtesy but succinctly.

"Really now, you know, is there no hope for me at all, Miss Clyde?"

"None at all," said Pauline, shaking her head.

"Now, is not that rather rough on a fellow? Your mamma gave me to understand, you know, that she consented if you would, and my own parents——"

"It is quite useless for you to say any more," said Pauline, "and I don't believe you can think I ever encouraged you."

"Well, I don't know," said Beaumains, who felt aggrieved and testy; "I think you have kept me dangling about a good while, don't you know? I intended to go to the prairies and

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that, and I have wasted all my summer in this deuced hole—I beg your pardon!"

"I am sorry," said Pauline, haughtily.

"I beg your pardon. I did not mean your house, of course. Your mother and Mrs. Train have been awfully kind to me, but I hate this sort of thing, you know—dressing and lunching and going about; I am not accustomed to it, it knocks me all up. And if I had been accepted——"

"You see," said Pauline, who was growing angry at his persistence, "I love another man;" and she leaned back on the divan with a malicious enjoyment of his amazement.

"I think if Mrs. Clyde had told me this before," he said stiffly, after a pause, "it would have been just as well. Much better. There wasn't any object, don't you know, in making an ass of me. But if it has afforded you a moment's amusement, Miss Clyde, and to your friends, I suppose I must rest content."

He spoke with bitterness but with a certain dignity. She had never liked him half

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so well as at this moment. She regretted to have pained him, and she told him so, with gentle womanliness, holding her hand out to him in contrition. He took it and held it for a moment in both his own with reverence.

"You are a beautiful girl," he said, "and I wasn't worthy of you. I have been an only son with a lot of sisters and I have been rather rackety and spoiled, you know. It is in our blood, I am afraid; but there are a great many girls who would not be as frank and fair as you have been, and I am sorry I was cross just now. Forgive me, won't you? And if ever you come to England let me know; I'd like to see you again when I get over this. I shall be sailing, I am thinking, directly."

His vanity was more wounded than his heart; but, at any rate, he behaved like a gentleman. He knew, what he did not say, that there were those who, without love or semblance of it, would gladly take what he could offer—title and rank and moated castles, which appeal to women with their romance and their traditions, fed as they are on fairy tales and fic-

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tion. The fact that Pauline's hand went with her affections filled him with unexpressed respect. A few months later, however, before he left the "States," he had found consolation: he was engaged to Mrs. Ovid Train.

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CHAPTER XIX

THERE came at this time to the great North American watering-place, inspired by the curiosity of exhausted resource, an Austrian prince, a robust blond Apollo, unavoidably armed with documents introductory to Mrs. Clyde, and as infallibly predestined to become a suitor for her daughter. Prinz Clodvig von Auersperg-Donnersmark had left his widowed mother in the cool and fragrant depths of her Cisleithan castle. She had obliged him to sign a paper to the effect that he would not bring home an American wife. She was a Bavarian princess and a Roman Catholic. It was probably this enforced pledge which decided Clodvig, the very first time he saw Pauline, some day to ask for her hand. He determined not only to marry the girl, but to impose her upon his relatives and make her the fashion in his own country. Of this last exploit he was eminently capable. He

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was one of those men whose attentions make women important, whose neglect dwarfs them. He had also the faculty of making other men appear insignificant. Would he belittle Trefusis? With Pauline such an ordeal could be safely met. She would have loved him all the more. She was generous. The attribute of domination, often born of audacity, of vanity, of unscrupulousness, is doubtless of service to a man. Useful when turned into wide channels, it is more generally thrown away on trifles and becomes as futile as the talent some persons who could not earn a dollar possess for repeating the multiplication table backward, the names of presidents or the number of stars in each constellation.

The prince had a genius for imposing his women not only upon men, but upon other women, and he could make the lady whom he distinguished, eminent. He had numerous personal gifts and graces to bring to this feat. He was accomplished, elegant, agreeable, and although his material prosperity lay principally in lands and titles, he was not absolutely without income.

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During a momentary coldness between the lovers, born of their difficulties and embarrassments, Trefusis—who was prone to look upon Pauline's occasional *boutades* as assured marks of a wavering allegiance—had proudly withdrawn to nurse his wrongs and curse the feminine sex. Pauline, thus forsaken, met the prince. However deep or shallow may have been his schemes, however serious or flippant his designs, it is certain that the young man brought every art of his intelligence to the ardent court he paid the beautiful girl. Pauline, fevered by the apparent indifference—which was in fact an agonizing effort—of her lover, threw herself, in the frenzy of her pique, into a flirtation with the foreigner. It is safe to say that her healthy American heart remained stanch to her love, and that she escaped unscathed from the ordeal of a very positive allurement.

The plain woman who boasts of her absolute fidelity to the man who has chosen her—she rarely chooses for herself—has, in her stupendous gratitude, little idea of the temptations to which a handsome woman is subjected. Petted, pampered, worshipped, with a hundred men

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always at her heels ready for, nay, insisting on burning incense before her, she must possess indeed a powerful attachment, as well as a steady brain, to resist the intoxication of incessant adoration. It is presumable that the woman who has the leisure to shut herself up with her one affection, turn it over and congratulate herself upon its singleness, will look askance at her fairer sister; who seems now and again to listen somewhat too complacently to the voice of outside charmers. The critic should always comprehend, never deplore. No love is secure until all seductions have been employed to weaken it. Resisting these, it has proved itself.

It is probable that Trefusis could make use of no such philosophy. He looked on askance, profoundly wounded, horribly jealous. This time he feared his rival. Another witness was in rapture—Pauline's mother. Too much occupied with the entanglements of her own affairs to bring any absorbing study to her daughter's present performance, not perhaps gifted to a great degree with that fine observation which is one of the highest functions of human intellect, Mrs. Clyde was deceived. She laughed

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behind her fan to some ladies of her acquaintance, about the discomfiture of those insignificant, yet despicable intriguers who thought to turn her girl aside from the paths laid out for her by Providence. She concluded that, after all, Pauline was wise.

Trefusis, as I have said, watched her from afar, sombre, resentful, enigmatic. Then he suddenly disappeared. But it was a heart-breaking game the poor girl was playing and was to bring its swift reaction.

Her lover left a word. It was full of reproach, full of the madness of youth's despair; above all, touching in its simple arraignment of her cruelty, and it ended with one of those appeals whose sincerity women can not doubt, and to which they succumb. It sent Pauline rushing one afternoon into Boston alone, unheralded, leaving an incoherent note on her mother's desk—this lady had gone to a fête in Providence. Launcelot's pain had produced a crisis.

She brought up rather unromantically in a hired cab at Mrs. Train's town mansion.

Mrs. Train, who was *en ville* for two days on her way to the mountains, found her in the

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twilight of her drawing-room, amid shrouded furniture, under the sheeted portrait of the late Ovid, pacing the floor, wringing her hands. Pauline told her friend Coy that she had summoned Trefusis by telegram sent to his office, that he would even now be arriving—would she, would she, would dear, dear Coy lend them her hospitality for an hour? Just one little hour?

Coy, whose gratitude toward Mrs. Clyde, if warm, was human, and whose own arrangements were just now eminently satisfactory, was found to be good-natured.

Pauline held her lover's letter in her hand. "You know," it said, "all my aspirations and deepest shame. I have no chance with these idlers who surround you. I see another preferred to myself. If you forsake me I can not promise to live on. Do you despise me because I have to work? I have to do it for others. I am haunted like a plague-stricken creature with the thought that you are tired of me—that I displease you. I know myself unworthy of such a brilliant beauty as you are. I have nothing to give you but my adoration. I had dreamed that we should walk up some cathedral aisle,

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your hand upon my arm. Now the dream is dead! . . ."

He was very young.

Mrs. Train was allowed to look at the letter. She declared it evident that the gentleman intended to shoot himself. The two women paled and trembled, and were deliciously wretched.

"He is frightfully jealous of the prince," said Coy.

"Why doesn't he say it then?" said Pauline, with a toss.

"Ah, my dear, men do so hate to acknowledge it," said her more experienced friend.

Even while they talked Trefusis was on the threshold. The pain of separation had become to him such atrocious suffering that he had hurried instantly to her call. Everything was thrown to the winds. Swiftly and discreetly Coy vanished through a neighbouring doorway. They were face to face at last. Outside, an Italian organ-grinder wrung out Aïda.

"T'avea il cielo per l'amor creata
Ed io t'uccido per averti amata."

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And by and bye a brown girl he had with him slipped into Tosti's Venetian love-song, dancing on the sidewalk as she sang—

"Allor che il guardo languido
Su me posou n'istante
Io ne divenni amante
Ohè mamma! Ohè mamma!"

Crushed to his heart—on his lips which sought her proud and yielding ones with all the fever of his tortured, jealous and commanding love—she recognised her lord.

"She had fled to the forest to hear a love tale:
And the youth it was told by was Alan Adale."

Ah! What matter if the forest was Mrs. Train's "front parlour," as the housemaid who peered in curiously at them would have called it? What mattered the sepulchral linen upon the sofas and chairs and the swathed eyes of the departed Ovid?

"They are beautiful like two angels, like two angels," said Delia to herself. She had found them sitting hand in hand, their eyes drinking of each other's light; breathless in their content, exalted like the seraphim who look upon the eternal. "They are beautiful as

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angels." Yea, to them had been for a brief space revealed the apocalyptic vision which maketh man immortal. They stood on either side of an abyss which swallowed all except themselves.

"Inerti i remi giacquero
Nel fondo del battello,
Il sogno era si bello!
Ohè mamma! Ohè mamma!"

Upon Pauline's insistence they were married that evening. "Mamma would never consent. It would be useless to go back," she said; "but if we run away she may forgive us afterward."

So, before two witnesses, one of whom was Mrs. Train, the knot was tied. Coy was carried away by the girl's wilfulness, swept on the tide of that sentimentality which lurked in her odd dual character. She it was who undertook to reconcile the offended mother and write the news. The breach between herself and Mrs. Clyde was not soon healed. When, a few months later, her own marriage to Beaumains took place, it was not to be denied that Mrs. Clyde had some excuse for believing her protegée guilty of treachery. Coy's perfect amiabil-

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ity and forbearance, however—during an interview which became historic, and in which the injured lady expressed her opinion in prose so muscular that an ear-witness is said to have fainted—bore later fruits of peace. As we have many times remarked, Mrs. Clyde's memory was not vindictive. She had the sagacity of condonation.

In these first days, however, of a very natural wrathfulness, there was one visit whose exquisite experiment she would not deny herself, and for which her maid prepared her in gloomy and portentous silence. Passing a powdery *patte de lièvre* over her cheeks, some red salve on her lips, she donned her heaviest satin gown, her finest beplumed bonnet, and armed herself with a parasol whose dimensions and vivid colour seemed to the half-frightened attendant ominous of threat, if not of conflict. Thus accoutred, waving this oriflamme, she loftily descended to her largest and most imposing barouche. She threw to her footman the names of certain streets at whose apex the house she sought was to be expected. The footman whispered them to the coachman with malicious smiling. The carriage

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swayed through the narrow town, attracting with its occupant the usual meed of mild remark. Having passed a shop which advertised "sea food," a news-stand, a fruiterer's, a church, it drew up abruptly at a gate which opened on a half acre of grassy lawn. There three or four large trees shaded an old colonial dwelling.

Producing her card, Mrs. Clyde bade her man ask if Mrs. Trefusis was at home. Five minutes later she was admitted to the drawing-room. The hall door had been opened to her by a slightly disordered person in a pink cotton frock and soiled apron, who emerged from some lower region. While opening a shutter and showing Mrs. Clyde a seat, she ramblingly explained that the waitress was occupied in giving Mr. Trefusis his supper, and that she was not "used" to admitting visitors. This apologetic demeanour seemed only to stiffen the cords of Mrs. Clyde's neck and shoulders and to give her bristling headgear an almost abnormal rigidity. The woman fidgeted, stood irresolute a moment, and then saying that her lady would be "down," immediately quitted the room.

It was fully ten minutes, however, before

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Mrs. Trefusis arrived, and Mrs. Clyde had ample leisure to study the interior into which destiny had so ruthlessly thrust her. Mrs. Clyde had for so many years moved amid beautiful things, seen and heard the best that art could furnish, that she was not devoid of that critical quality which forms if it does not bestow taste. She found nothing here to jar. In fact, coming from the garish over-decoration of the Newport villas, she found a tranquility and a charm in the wide, cool hall she had traversed and in this dim room, with its tall white mantelpiece, its midway arch and the delicate tracery of its high ceiling. The stiff chairs and sofas were covered with faded yellow reps. The modern note was furnished by a French lamp, some flowers, and by the fact that the books upon the table were evidently intended for reading and not for ornament. A few really fine engravings on the walls gave an air of refinement and repose to the apartment, which even the ferocity of Mrs. Clyde's prejudice had to acknowledge. As she sat upon the sofa, a wish that she had not come, a sudden lassitude, almost a self-disgust, born perhaps of some subtle link between this quiet house and her own

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childhood's home, invaded her. The weakness was of short duration. Endurance was not her province. The courage which bears springs not from strength, but from patience. Weak people astonish us with their fortitude in suffering. Mrs. Clyde's courage was not supple. Five minutes more and it had shaken off its languors.

A warrior ready to spring on an adversary met Mrs. Trefusis's calm greeting. If Mrs. Clyde was dressed with richness but without grace, Mrs. Trefusis was dressed with neither. Her soft gray hair was smoothed under a plain white cap, which was pinned beneath her scant chignon without coquetry or elegance. She was petite, and the severity of her short black skirt seemed to accentuate this brevity of stature. That bloom to which early decay is predicted, but which frequently outlives form and expression, had never been her portion. She had always been pale. Her face was oval, her features regular and her eyes expressive. They had been sad even in girlhood. What had once lurked in them as a presentiment was now a record. Her aspect was one of resignation; but there was firmness on her worn lips.

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"I am sorry to have kept you waiting," she said advancing; "but my husband is an invalid —a great sufferer, and——"

"I regret to have disturbed him," said Mrs. Clyde, rising. "I only came to ask you—where is my daughter?" As she hurled her *coup* she glanced about the apartment as if asking the tables, chairs and cupboards to give up the secret of Pauline's concealment. "My child has been stolen from me. Where is she?" She raised her parasol with a dramatic gesture.

"We are as ignorant as you can be to-day of the whereabouts of the wayward young people," said Mrs. Trefusis, flushing painfully; "and I am glad you give me, Mrs. Clyde, the opportunity to tell you so. Please sit down," she said imploringly, "and let us talk over this unfortunate affair." But Mrs. Clyde remained upon her feet.

"We know that people are false, but every new proof surprises us. You do not expect me to believe, Mrs. Tre—Tra—la—what is your name?—that you are quite as ingenuous over this infamy which has robbed me of my girl, as you pretend?"

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"You can not deplore my son's conduct more than I—than we do. It has made his father ill. I feel for you from the bottom of my soul." The little lady spoke with feeling.

"Your son, Mrs. Tre—Tra——"

"Trefusis—the Tre is Welsh."

"Taffy, too, I believe, was a Welshman," said Mrs. Clyde.

"I don't think he was an ancestor," said Mrs. Trefusis, smiling faintly. This smile let loose the dogs of war.

"Nevertheless your son shares his propensity for theft; and you dare laugh in my face, in your own house, after abetting his cowardice in alluring a well-brought-up girl from her natural protector and guardian! She who has had all the best *partis* of the world at her feet—Lord Beaumains, son of the Earl of Dearborn—Prince Auersperg-Donnersmark asked me for her hand only yesterday—openly, like the gentlemen that they are—while your son comes clandestinely——"

"I do not wonder you are angry," said Mrs. Trefusis. "I can not blame you. Some day, perhaps, you will know his worth and learn to

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judge him less harshly. Passion is a poor counsellor. It was so to him, it is so to you."

Mrs. Clyde went on excitedly, as if not heeding her: "But I suppose you never even heard of my daughter's loveliness—of her friends——"

"Pardon me," said Mrs. Trefusis; "I have heard of you—heard of you long ago, and now again. I have heard you called a woman of the world, taxed with hardness, frivolity and selfishness, but I was inclined to make excuses for you, to believe you were misunderstood. When such as you discard their old friends, Mrs. Clyde, they need look for no especial allegiance from their new. It is the fate of the newly made rich to get scant loyalty, for loyalty means traditions of affection." She was herself standing now and confronting Mrs. Clyde. Her slight figure seemed to have gained a certain dignity. "Odd as it may seem to you, I did not wish your daughter for his wife. I fear the women of your world."

"Folderol with all such hypocritical cant. I fancy you are not insensible to the benefits of income, particularly if you have English blood in you. You must have known——"

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"I knew my son's infatuation," said Mrs. Trefusis, still gently. "Poor boy, he could not well conceal it. I can forgive the injustice that you do my Launce because you do not know him. I do not like his marriage better than you do. Rich women are the first to cast a man's own poverty in his teeth. I do not wish this indignity for him. He has not earned it. He loves her."

"A pretty way to prove it, then, to sneak into my house like this—furtively——"

A sudden fire sprang into Mrs. Trefusis's dark eyes. "If you knew his noble heart you could not accuse him of baseness," she said. "He must have indeed been boldly challenged, so to forget his duty."

It is easy to crush inferiors. Mrs. Clyde was beginning to feel that she had met her equal, an adversary worthy of her—umbrella. She clutched it with renewed vigour, beating the air. "She seduced and ran away with *him!* Is that what you mean?" she almost screamed. "Why don't you say so at once? Why don't you call my child a strumpet? Is this your judgment of my daughter's modesty? Is this all she gets for

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degrading herself?" She had a disheartened sense that this "Trefusis woman" would not understand, that to the outsider all in the same orbit are compeers. Only the stars know that there are degrees of splendour, planets and satellites. They had stolen her Pauline and could not even discern the heaven in which she had reigned supreme, and from which she had fallen.

"Believe me, Mrs. Clyde, I feel for you sincerely," said Mrs. Trefusis, in a broken voice. "We are both mothers; both poor, miserable women. I beg you to believe I blame my son severely. You may pity me as I pity you; but I know nothing, nothing except that they are married." Demonax bade the Athenians pull down their altars to pity before indulging in the cruel battles of the amphitheatre.

"I don't want your pity. I want my girl. I shall come here with the police and institute a search through this house. Yes, this very night. You are concealing her upstairs in some closet. I feel it. I shall go up and see your husband. I shall have the law on you, and shall be righted. I have no doubt she is already unhappy, the poor deluded and deceived creature that she is. You

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shall be forced to give her up. When I think of that adder, Coy Train, whom I have nursed in this bosom, and clothed and fed, and married, and the way she has behaved to me, I could tear down these walls and shriek to the whole town the perfidy of which I am the victim!" She walked toward her hostess with inflamed eyeballs. The little lady rapidly retreated behind the table. "It is the anger of a baffled beast, not the sorrow of a hurt soul," she thought; but perhaps she was wrong. Gabriella suffered.

"And what is *he*, this precious son of yours," she now went on in a torrent of unresisted fury, "to ruin my Pauline's life and mine like this—a low-born low-bred cur——"

This was too much. Mrs. Trefusis's whole face became convulsed with anger. Her eyes flashed, her lips quivered; her white cap seemed to rise up on her forehead and assume the aspect of a helmet, her chaste gown to become an armour, a fan she had picked up in her excitement, a spear. "Oh, Gabriella Dunham! You asked me if I knew you. How odd it seems to me to hear you talk like this. Why, I know *all* about you. All. Ever since we were both little tots

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—I think we must be the same age—I have known you. I am a niece of Abraham Adams, of Methuen. Your ancestor, the first John Dunham, chopped wood for my great-grandfather when he was governor of the State. I believe he chopped it nicely. The governor paid his way through college. I believe he learned enough to teach school afterward. It is local history—perhaps you have no time to read. Oh, Gabriella Dunham, how dare you force yourself into my presence and insult my boy to his own mother? When I came down to you my heart was full of sorrow for you, but now it holds nothing but scorn. There is the door, Mrs. Clyde—you can go out of it. If you do not do so quickly, I will have you put out, you vulgar, red-faced, painted Jezebel!"

As Mrs. Trefusis pronounced this benedictus she looked positively imposing.

After a somewhat hurried and inglorious exit, Mrs. Clyde hardly knew how she got herself home. She felt so greatly exhausted and so in need of sympathy that she sent for the bishop.

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CHAPTER XX

WHEN she came down into the pink boudoir to greet the prelate the following morning, the storm had spent itself. She was once more erect, with half-closed eyelids and head upheld. Troubles of more recent date, if less acute, were uppermost.

"Misfortunes never come singly," she said, giving him her hand. "I have just discovered that Martine, my maid, is dishonest. You must forgive me that I am not dressed. The detectives are sitting outside of her door. I have locked her in. I shall let her out at half-past six for an hour to dress my hair. I find she has been helping herself to my jewelry, besides laying levies upon my pocketbook. After my toilet is made, she will be instantly locked up again. I now believe that she was implicated in the frightful cabal which has robbed me of my only child. Ah, my dear, kind friend, I am indeed a

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most persecuted woman. You are good to come to me."

Her voice was low and sweet, and the bishop felt sorry for her. The smile which her suspicions of her maid elicited was quickly concealed under an air of attention, not wholly feigned. Bishop Lowther was a priest who might have filled the role of those pampered abbés, the trusted counsellors of French great ladies in the last century. Handsome and distinguished in person, graceful in manner, he possessed all their finesse, diplomacy and deftness, while presumably guiltless of their vices. Polished, discreet, conservative, he seemed created for guide to the birds of gay plumage who fluttered every Sunday morning into their pews to listen to his cheering sermons. Cheering they were rather than terrifying. His Christianity above all was the gospel of hope. If not exalted it was eminently encouraging. His worldly wisdom, born of environment and circumstance, gave him a wide charity. He looked at men and women with philosophic clearness. He did not think to gather "figs from thorns, or grapes from thistles," yet he was amiably inclined to believe

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that thorns and thistles might have their uses; that in some future evolution of spiritual force even these worthless products might be garnered to some purpose. He was able to apprehend Mrs. Clyde. To see that she had her niche in a world of mediocrity; that her strong individuality was not sporadic but a product. She did more than amuse him—she interested him. He came to her summons with alacrity and now he held out his hands to her in friendly sympathy. He was inclined to pity her isolation; but as I have said, the blizzard was over. It was the last moan of a dying tempest to which the bishop was called upon to listen.

"All I asked of her was to profit by my efforts," she was saying to him. "God knows my life has been a struggle." He did not feel compelled to tell her, as would have done the more ascetic of his brethren, that the struggle was in vain, because its objects were pernicious, futile and vile. He did not expect figs from this thorn, or grapes from this thistle, but he felt that this particular thistle and thorn was of such a growth and strength that its development was worthy better things, perhaps, than the fires of

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Gehenna. Such as it was, it now lay broken and bruised, so that the bishop, who had a kindly heart, felt inclined to raise and bind it and set it on its stem and to bid it stand upright, just as One whom he had sworn to emulate bade the cripple stand, take up his bed and walk.

The bishop had come to console; he would not stay to upbraid. He knew all Mrs. Clyde's weakness and understood it. He could comprehend earthly ambitions: he was a father. He appealed to that very weakness. He was as wily as a serpent, if innocuous as a dove.

"Where is my reward?" said Mrs. Clyde.

"Ah, my dear lady," said the bishop, "there is none for parents—none. This vicarious sacrifice does not suit the energies of twenty—they want to struggle for themselves. My poor wife felt as you do when our Enid married, not wisely as we felt, and so young. She was not beautiful like your Pauline, but we thought her very sweet."

"She is very sweet," said Mrs. Clyde.

"She had been her mamma's constant companion and confidante—too much so. I doubt if we should keep the young with us so much.

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Companionship of their own age is preferable. We unconsciously imbue them with our own distrust of motive, with our dejections, disillusions, cynicisms. You are making yourself much more wretched than you need. Pauline has been disobedient and we must condemn her. While Trefusis, whom I know well and who is a fine fellow, has been led away by his infatuation. Miss Pauline is very attractive. He is much enamoured. Now, you are so far-seeing and so intelligent, you must perceive that the very attributes you deplore in these young people are the ones which may carry them far. Their step—though rash—shows character. The girl who takes such initiative, runs such risks, is often the very one who will push her husband in the paths of fame and success; a man whose ardour gets the better of his judgment is sometimes possessed of those qualities which herald genius. Genius, you know," he said smiling, "is a spirit out of bondage. It clips the wind. We, who have none, hug our chains and say it is insane; but no code of Theodosian or Justinian could ever bind it! You will live to see Pauline a splendid flower of our American

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civilization, her husband President of the United States! Believe me, it is a far healthier ambition than to build up the decadents of the Old World and be their tools, if not their dupes."

Mrs. Clyde dried her eyes and looked up at the wily bishop with the eagerness of one who longs to be convinced. She hated gloom.

"You do me good," she murmured.

"Ah, dear me! These hot impulses of youth are disquieting, no doubt, but are they not heaven-directed? It must have been old fellows like myself who made the laws insisting youth should revere age. It is youth we should revere, with all its beautiful beliefs and hopes which we have jeopardized or forfeited."

"You know him, you say?"

"Well. He was a class-mate of our Howard. He was the idol of the class, their avowed leader."

"It seems the mother was a niece of Abraham Adams, of Methuen. I know the family. I had rather a warm encounter with her—the mother, I mean." Mrs. Clyde laughed, raising her handkerchief to her mouth.

"She is a lady and a charming person. The

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father is a man of parts, of thought. The mother's people were always prominent in State and Church—legislators, clergymen, governors, men of refinement and education—admirable, while Trefusis is of good Welsh stock—with a crest," added the bishop smiling. Then these two laughed together in an *entente* which was Masonic.

"And my enemies all triumphing over me!" said Mrs. Clyde in her last protest. "All these wicked, wicked tongues set a-wagging. Ah, bishop, it seems to me more than a saint can support. When I think of it, I am outraged." And a fresh burst of anger seemed imminent as Mrs. Clyde threw back her head and the blood mounted to her face.

"Depend upon it, my dear madam, it is you who can give or deny them food for their *malveillance*. Nothing will give them more content than to see a house as powerful as your own divided against itself. Remember where it is written that such an house must fall. Bless me! how uncommon is romance in this material day of ours! Try and think leniently of your erring Romeo and Juliet and call them back to you to

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be forgiven. Ah!" he added, rising, and becoming suddenly very grave, "love and forgiveness—love and forgiveness—there is nothing else—that is best."

Her head dropped for a moment upon her breast.

"God bless and comfort you, my daughter," said the bishop, just touching her forehead with his finger.

"Thank you," she murmured, inaudibly. A silence fell between them. By and bye, "It *is* romantic," she said. "Pauline has spirit." She followed him to the door. "How does the orphanage get on?" she asked a little huskily.

"Well enough—well enough. We make the little dears as comfortable as we can, but we are always hard up, ready for contributions."

He waved his farewell from the veranda steps.

"I will send one," she called out after him.

She came back into the hall. Romeo and Juliet! She crossed into the library. She pushed a chair before her to the bookcase. She hoisted herself on the seat with some effort, for she was growing stout—ah, yes, here it was!

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She found her Shakespeare, all the volumes, Merchant of Venice, All's Well That Ends Well, Timon of Athens, Romeo and Juliet—here it was! How her once fine mind was dwindling with her soul on empty husks, starved of real aliment! How many decades did it seem since she had read! How many years since she had thought! She came off her perch rather ponderously, and blowing on the dusty margin, opened at the page. She began to read. How should she silence her enemies? Romance? Yes, here was a loophole. The poor woman read and read and read, lost at last in the enthralling tale, rocked by the tragic poem of love, so dear to all youth—to all youth—ay, once to her own.

She was so absorbed that when the butler announced "The Princess d'Istria and two other ladies, madam," she frowned at him, impatient of interruption. It was too late. They were already in the drawing-room. She carefully slipped a card to hold her page and went to greet her visitors.

A red sunset was bleeding in the sky, filling the room with crimson. Great roses made it

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sweet, dipping their long and leafy stems in crystal bowls. "Detail is costly, but effect is cheap," Mrs. Clyde had been wont to say when advising thrift to younger friends. In this apartment effect was paramount. Colour, richness and warmth were produced with simple disposition of lights, flowers and draperies.

The Princess d'Istria had brought with her an English lady, whom Mrs. Clyde had known in Rome, where she resided. Boadicea, Duchess of Stavordale, was now visiting her friend, the princess, at her cottage on Bellevue Avenue. The third lady was Mrs. Dennison Fay Prentiss. Madame d'Istria was one of those women whose friendship savours a little too much of philanthropy, whose civility to her acquaintance carries some of the stiff condescension with which we approach the poor; but the glance which her deep eyes directed toward Mrs. Clyde was not one of commiseration. The duchess was a fat, gloomy person, who, one of her numerous daughters having eloped with a groom, was supposed to be unusually well fitted to sympathize with Mrs. Clyde's present dilemma. If this particular Queen of the Iceni had not been flogged

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like her namesake, she had nevertheless been chastened. Mrs. Prentiss's curiosity was piqued by a stinging desire to see how Mrs. Clyde would bear herself under this disappointment. She had never liked her.

"I should have called upon you before," said the princess, "but have been far from well."

"Your indisposition has not affected your beauty," said Gabriella, in her largest manner.

The conversation was led into impersonal channels, but the duchess and Mrs. Prentiss were thirsting for information and were not to be quenched with drops. They lost patience and rushed at the fountainhead.

"We have felt so much for you," ventured Mrs. Prentiss.

"When I saw that young man," said the duchess, "I remarked to Aurelia that I did not like his expression. Don't you remember, my dear? I said it was quite eerie."

"To whom do you allude?" asked Mrs. Clyde sharply.

"We knew you were greatly afflicted," said Mrs. Prentiss. "The duchess means young Trefusis, of course—who—who——"

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"Oh, Lochinvar," said Mrs. Clyde, smiling. "Yes, he has carried off my baby, and I am a lonely enough old hen without her; but what will you have? We must revere these impulses of youth." (She repeated the bishop's words.) "I hear nothing but praises of him. His family is one of the first in the land—nothing better. He is full of talent, a rising man. We shall hear of him. Pauline was *entêtée*. I was blind. I should of course have been better pleased to see her one day Countess of Dearborn or Princess of Auersperg-Donnersmark, but if these gentlemen did not know how to win her, it is not my fault, is it? She fell in love. Romeo and Juliet, Romeo and Juliet!"

"I came to congratulate you," said Madame d'Istria, "on Pauline's narrow escape. I have tested princes." There was a silence. The princess continued. "I confess I have found the pardoning process in my own case to be difficult, but I would advise you to forgive Pauline."

"I shall not quarrel with my only child," said Mrs. Clyde, with some dignity. "My home is hers always. When they come back they will be received."

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"And to say we came to weep with her!" said the ladies when they got themselves into their landau.

"Pauline is an undutiful minx," said the duchess, settling herself on the back seat. "I don't see, Aurelia, how you can admire her conduct. She was horridly spoiled when a little child in Rome. As for the young man, I do not like the look of him. He resembles Henry VIII. He must have been thinking of her money. I dare say he will murder her after he has got it." Which lurid presage seemed to give her grace a measure of satisfaction. "I consider her mamma far too lenient. When I had my trouble with our Arabella——"

"Our men aren't tuft-hunters or mercenary like Europeans," said Mrs. Prentiss a little spitefully. "Mr. Trefusis is quite good enough for the Clydes."

"She is a wonderful woman," murmured Aurelia d'Istria, "and I respect her."

"La!" said the duchess, who was disappointed at her ineffectual onslaught upon the ravisher.

"They won't crow over me this time,"

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thought Gabriella, "and as for that silly-tongued old parrot, the duchess, who thinks she can patronize her betters, she had better look after her footman son-in-law and leave mine, who is a gentleman, to manage his own affairs."

She ordered her carriage and had herself conveyed to the cliffs. The weather had changed. The evening was falling dark and gusty. It weighed upon her spirit. The efforts she was making were telling upon her nerves. She felt that she could not brook to meet the staring cohorts of Bellevue Avenue; she craved an hour's physical activity. In certain dispositions of the mind, movement is as indispensable as solitude. She got out of her low victoria in one of the cross-roads which lead to the sea. She bade her men meet her farther on, naming the Heathcotes' villa, a half mile distant, near which they were to wait.

She was infinitely *triste*. Martine's defection, the lack of devotion among her other servitors, the too evident indifference of her friends, the gratification of her detractors, certain entanglements of her property—which was mismanaged, and her income thus embarrassed, if

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not jeopardized—came as so many insect stings to probe and fret above the one great ache.

She had brought no energy to her toilet; possibly for this reason, it was unusually becoming. She was dressed in closely fitting black, with a dark hat and veil. She looked slenderer than usual, more simple and more womanly. One would scarcely have recognised in this quiet figure the enraged virago of the Trefusis episode. The corners of her mouth drooped pathetically, as if appealing to some hidden tribunal for absolution from further pain. An unusually gentle mood was upon her—the restfulness of the irrevocable. She had heard from Pauline; and had written to her, and had been surprised at her own lenity. She was tired of warfare—sick of it all. Such minutes were so rare with her as to be doubly strange. She was gripped, as it were, in the limitations of her own powers. She had been beaten and was almost anxious to lay down her arms.

The cliffs were deserted. Nay, not quite, for approaching her, walking slowly, the form of a man suddenly detached itself from the bushes and loomed before her on the narrow path. She

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hastily drew her veil across her lips, hoping it might not be an acquaintance. It seemed unlikely. Her world was never here at this late hour.

As the figure approached her in the dusk against the background of vague sky, she saw it was no Newporter, yet there was a certain familiarity in the gait. They drew close to each other. He stepped aside to let her pass him, raising his hand to his hat. Although he was dressed like other men, there was about him that unmistakable *tenue* which is acquired only through military discipline. Modern athletics do not bestow the impressive brevet. The tender brown mustache was now a bristling gray; the Endymion curls, cropped fiercely *en brosse*, had retreated from the low, broad brow; the delicate, insignificant features seemed to have acquired rugged outlines; the complexion had bronzed, while the shoulders had the breadth and assurance of the soldier's whose battles have all been victories. The deep breaths of success enlarge.

"Walter!" faltered Mrs. Clyde.

"Mrs. Clyde!"

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CHAPTER XXI

SHE regretted her strained relations with Martine which had prevented her from putting on her new cobalt bonnet. Her dark toque had been pinned by less artistic forethought. She raised her hand to settle it with the woman's rapid instinct of self-respect. A fitful wind had whirled her hair.

"It must be my voice that you remember," she said to him, as he turned and swung himself into her pace. "Surely you could never have recognised my face."

"I should have recognised it anywhere," he answered, gallantly, "even far from here, where I knew it possible."

"But you would not have looked me up?" she asked, reproachfully.

He shrugged away the imputation. "How could I tell it would not bore you?"

"Bore me to receive an old friend and a

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great general," she said, " whose honours are on every tongue? "

" I remember I used to bore you awfully," he replied, " in my callow days. But then I was only in the ranks."

She detected a tremour of irony in his voice.

" Ah! " she said, " I was too impatient."

" No, too wise."

Even at this great distance the wound had left some trace. He really cared, she thought.

" Deep characters like yours, General Perry, feel small hurts too much."

It seemed she had not quite thrown away the hero in her soul.

" You call it small? "

" If you believed me treacherous . . . Walter," she said, with unexplained emotion, " I have been punished—I am alone."

" Oh, I fancy never that," he replied, a little dryly; " always surrounded, always a sovereign, always the first."

She swallowed a sob from she knew not what spring.

" I am alone. My only child has just deserted me."

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He grew grave immediately. "I had heard —something."

"You," she said abruptly, "how many have you? Children?"

"My boy is at West Point, my girls—two—are with their mother at the hotel."

"You are here for the review? to meet the President? My personal interests have been so paramount these last few days I have scarcely seen the newspapers."

"Yes. Then I return to my command."

"Life has treated you well, as you deserved."

"Do you believe in deserts?" he asked, looking at her narrowly; "in special interpositions of Providence? We have travelled far from those old times when doubt was imputed sin."

"Yes, certainly, I believe in retribution."

"Then why did not you get the small-pox and lose your beauty, like the little girls in French story-books, after you gave me the mitten so cruelly? The only retribution is the effect of our actions upon ourselves."

She pulled at her hat again. It was such a long time since words like these had brushed her

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ears! She laughed. "Time gives us all the small-pox," she said. "But really, it has only improved you. You look taller."

"A mere question of epaulets," he said, just touching his left shoulder with his cane.

"I want to see you wear them."

"Shall you come to the review at the fort? Will it be fashionable?"

"We will make it so," she said. He was a warrior at once disarmed.

"Dear me," he said, "that 'we,' Mrs. Clyde, has given me the heart-beat."

"Not fatal, I hope."

Their eyes met and read for a moment all the awe of destiny. They strolled along in silence, with only the solemnity of the sea between them.

"It is difficult to say," he finally murmured, "just how fatal remembrance may be. What to one is an obstacle, to another is a stepping-stone. You and I, Mrs. Clyde, are different only in this, you leap impedimenta, I painfully climb over them."

Mrs. Clyde was not sentimental. She was already deciding on what day to ask them to dine, and hoping the girls were tolerably nice-

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looking. Snobs are cowards. Mrs. Clyde was no such. She meant to give her hand to these new-comers. She was ready-witted enough now, in spite of social cogitations, to answer him in his own strain. She was also somewhat moved.

"Ah, leaping may make one breathless enough and tear one up sadly inwardly and outwardly. You have, at any rate, succeeded, while, to-day, I feel as if I had failed."

"I fervently hope," he said, "it is but a mood, for you were not born to be frustrated."

"And you are happy?"

He hesitated.

"What is happiness?"

"Oh, gratified ambitions," she said, promptly; "they alone give it. The affections torment."

"To me happiness seems a scope for the highest uses of our activity, for the development of our best aptitudes and talents. I found this, I suppose, when I embraced the military career, and therefore I am—happy."

"Then you agree with me that love——"

"Is torture? Yes, the selfish side of it.

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The wanting those we love to love us back again; to live the life we plan for them, not theirs; to minister to our pride, caprice and comfort. The love which knows no price, asks no reward, looks for no gratitude—that alone has dignity, that alone has value."

It was hard for her to soar, she had so clipped her wings; but the rudiments, it seems, are in us all—hers pushed for a moment to the light.

"I think I understand you," she said, quite softly. "That would be patriotism, philanthropy, religion; things that are noble and do not debase; things that for an instant uplift us out of ourselves, out of our squalor, to the stars."

He looked at her astonished. "When you left me, Gabriella, I had time to think of all these things long and bitterly. I knew I had but tried to cripple you, never to help you; I was all to my own aims and hopes. I was so young! I thought women were meant to further these. Dunham! What folly! I ought to have guessed you were made for the world. What an egotist, what a fool I was!"

"No, never that, and always generous." She

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began to feel somewhat exhausted, as people of the plain are wont to feel on mountain heights. She brought him back to lower latitudes.

"Here's my carriage. It is late. I will not ask you to come to me to-night; I will first call upon your wife and daughters. I may do so, *n' est ce pas?*" she said, simply.

"They will be charmed and honoured." He lifted his hat.

The footman sprang to the box, the horses pranced to the coachman's teasing whip. Mrs. Clyde waved her parasol.

> "Yet once she had leaned to his kiss,
> And once he had known her tears."

If he could moralize on the past and see where his mistakes had been, he could at the same time ask himself, were they mistakes? He did not much believe in the direct interposition of Providence. He lacked the complacency of the elect. "We should have crushed each other," he thought, a little sadly, as he wandered back through the darkness to his hotel. Yet, being a man of imagination, he did not belittle the romantic aspect of his meeting on the cliffs with his old love. Perhaps his vanity was just a

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trifle caressed by the reflection that he had been the first lover of a lady whose importance was acknowledged. If she did not seem to-day, as a woman, quite to account for the very real anguish she had once caused him, her celebrity as a public personage weighed in the balance of his appreciation. She had evidently been worth while. Few men can say this of their past illusions.

He soon had opportunity to gauge her particular potency. She called upon the wife and daughters. Mrs. Perry, who was a Western woman of some fortune, was found to be a person of large skeleton with a mouthful of very white teeth. The daughters were equally well articulated, and their dentition was as conspicuously adequate. They had the easy manner of the "army girl" joined to the veneer of the "best posts." The general explained Mrs. Clyde's kindnesses with the awkward tergiversations exploited by his sex in such predicament. All men are prudent with their women; in other words, cowards. Mrs. Perry was not inclined to indiscreet probings. If such were practised in the fastnesses of the connubial fortress they

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passed without much bloodshed. She was good-humoured and did not mean to quarrel with the success of her girls' "outing." We inflame the sentiment we recognise. Was Mrs. Perry astute enough to have guessed this?

Mrs. Clyde made not only the review, but the Perrys, the mode. They had a "heavenly" two weeks of it, thanks to her benignant offices. If the brave soldier lingered once and again to express his gratitude in slightly overwarm accents under the palms of the rose boudoir, if Gabriella told him all her sorrows and gained that sympathy she so desired, and of which her newer friends were niggardly, it is certain that the most prudish observer could have found no fault with the tenor of their *tête-à-têtes*. Mrs. Perry herself and the young ladies would indeed have had a jaundiced vision had they found aught to censure. She enjoyed the exhibition of her beneficence; she enjoyed—what woman would not?—the homage of one whose heart had once been wholly hers and still held the tender memory of Northern natures. What was more to the purpose, her own mercurial mind was distracted from useless broodings. The Perrys

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were useful to her as she to them. She danced them through their fortnight, bade them God-speed, and rested, with the conviction that after all even a wilful child could not quite poison the springs of strength.

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CHAPTER XXII

FIVE o'clock in a marble mansion, on a gay, sunny afternoon. Outside, the rumble of wheels, the oaths of the "cabby," the scream of the flying nurse invoking the arm of the law to pilot her perambulator across the maze, the lazy pose of the girl in the big hat and the youth in the covert coat at the corner, the occasional "bus" heaving its hulk in portentous proximity to the swaying tea-cart with its "smart" occupants, or the low barouche with its freight of loveliness. Inside, low, large dim rooms opening on a hall bright with its lighted lamps where footmen stand and wait to admit the *habitués* across the threshold of the inner sanctuary. These are the *intime* apartments. The loftier drawing-rooms, the ball-rooms, are above. Mr. Remington, well preserved in spite of his seventy-five years, is hugging the fire, in front of which he extends frozen fingers, while Mr. Ath-

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erton, an earlier comer, a man fascinating to women, lounges in an armchair close to the grate.

They are discussing the literary movement of the hour. Mrs. Heathcote and Mrs. Jack Gresham are exchanging social impressions, sipping their tea on a dark sofa. The hostess, in walking dress and boots, is exhaling anxious whispers to a gentleman unknown to the other visitors and whom she has hurriedly designated upon his entrance as her "lawyer." He listens to her with bent head in rapt attention, but his rat-like eyes devour the detail of an establishment whose secrets he fain would fathom.

"You must admit he has great skill," says Atherton.

"Yes, I admit it, but I am sick of his nigglings, tired of his processes, spent with his threshings."

"Are you still clinging to Victor Hugo?" said Atherton, with sarcastic laughter.

"I cling to the humanities. Yes, you are right. Romanticism! What is it? A matter of Fantine's hair and teeth? Is there any real-

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ism more awful than the mud of the tavern thrown in the creature's back? Eh?"

"Oh, those effects are so used, so hackneyed. In him"—he named a modern American novelist, penetratingly American in spite of or because he has chosen an English setting—"we have such delicate freshness——"

"Freshness! Bah! You call that freshness! Those *voulues* surprises! Those laboured climaxes! Give me the thrill which has sent me to the street to pick up some poor devil of the gutter and get him on his legs again; the tonic which has made me turn sickened away from the gratification of an animal whim."

"In other words, Remington, you crave the moral. It's the everlasting story! Oh, I admit the Papa Hugos gave it to us, *ad nauseam*."

"I crave something more than the mere fret and exhilaration of the intellect. Art should appeal to the emotions; speak to the heart."

"At least, you must acknowledge, he has written no line that shall stir morbid instincts."

"Granted he has the vision of a spectacled spinster, the morals of an English young ladies' governess. I bear him no grudge for this.

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But, in the name of heaven, what splendid action did he ever inspire? What tendency to crime did he ever arrest?"

"But such a master of style!"

"Yes, yes, no doubt; he is industrious, he has the trick, the nervous fluid of the word! No one fears it more than I do—the jugglery of the phrase! I was always its vassal, always its victim—the word's. It has ruined me. I don't minimize its influence. As an eminent man of letters was saying the other day: 'One must feel that the lasting triumphs of mankind belong to the wielders of the written word; that it is by the shades and semitones of language that soul speaks across the centuries to soul; that it is by verbal contours and pigments wrought into shapes of loveliness and power that the heart is shaken and the mind subdued.'"

"Bravo! that is poetry."

"I have a good memory; the phrase stuck to it; it isn't my own. He writes good English, our Sainte-Beuve! Do you read his editorials? They are full of fire. You see he thinks with me that the word is a missionary, a means, not an end."

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"Come, come, who doesn't? Our friend across the seas has himself lately uttered a note of pain. I felt my eyes film. There seemed some hope for him even with you." Mr. Atherton laughed again. "I consider his characterizations admirable. They are delicate types. He is a stenciler."

"Well, I'll concede that one of his stories, one of the last, even though the people were phantoms and the hero was a seraph—are seraphs male or female, by the way? I never could discover—did manage to distress me. There was a despairing cry somewhere hidden in it, a tear drowned. I never respected the fellow half so well."

"And he is never coarse, like——" He named a contemporary Englishman whose audacity alarmed.

"Coarse! Why, life is coarse. You can't be squeamish and portray it. You realists, Atherton, are the most inconsequent creatures. You shriek for the truth and when they give it to you make wry faces."

The ladies in their twilight angle were talking *chiffons*.

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"I have just come from Madame Donovan's. What taste she has! Her models are most original."

"I was there yesterday. It was quite a reception; a crowd."

"I told her to put away that yellow and silver for you. It has just your *chic*."

They turned to gossip.

"Do people really talk of Bianca Light with Lord Sylvester?" Mrs. Heathcote asked.

"Her mother does." Both ladies laughed.

"And is Pauline's husband really to run for Congress?"

"So *she* says." Mrs. Gresham's chin indicated the lady of the house. "You can fancy she's enchanted, even promises to provide the cash. That's the hardest. She's growing very parsimonious with the years."

"Who's that rodent with her now? He looks very nasty!"

"How should I know? They flock here, these vermin. They imagine cheese. One can't tell whether she is sincere with them or only posing to astonish them."

"They are certainly sufficiently astonished."

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"One thing is quite certain, they won't get paid, they won't get their cheese. This keeps one easy for her, poor dear!"

"What should we do without her?"

"Oh, my dear, we should do very well. We are all ungrateful. Society is cruel as the grave. It misses nobody."

"It has been wonderful, her sway."

"Yes. Eighteen years ago, when Pauline trotted off, do you remember how the women cackled? Those bloodless insect ones who sting because they are anæmic, who need blood and so suck other people's. It was Pauline, only Pauline, who allured. Everyone would desert now. Her house would become a desert. She would never more be the desired guest. She would, at best, retain a *succès d'estime* for half a year."

"Yes, and nothing of the kind happened at all, it seems. That was before my day."

"It wasn't Pauline, it was—herself. She went right on, and people came flocking to her, and she moved here to this charming house. Yet, lately, do you know, I have imagined her power was waning a little."

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"Yes, I have noticed it. She is crowded out by the new people."

"Think of it. That is what she used to be called, new!" They laughed.

"Pauline's marriage is very happy, is it not?"

"Yes, absolutely so, I believe. She has two exquisite children; her husband is able, successful. She looks well, very handsome, more rosy than in her girlhood. They hardly ever come to town, they live at their place all the year. He is in politics. Mrs. Clyde says she can not drag them down for a fortnight's gaiety. Pauline hates it."

"How odd, and such a belle as she was!"

"Her heart was never in it. She was romantic."

"Mrs. Clyde's daughter!"

"She had a father."

"Old Clyde? Was he romantic?"

"Perhaps; I never knew him."

"He did not look it; I saw him once when I was a child. But here come the ambassadors."

The German and Belgian ministers were an-

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nounced. "Ah! here you all are! Cushions" —the Prussian stumbled over one—"flowers, tea, ladies and Monsieur Remington." Greetings were exchanged. Mrs. Clyde brusquely dismissed her *homme d'affairs*, who sidled out with a crab-like bow to right and left.

At his club that night, over his kidney stew and whisky and water, he could brag to his contentment of his footing and familiarity with Mrs. Clyde and her female friends. He had taken tea with her that very afternoon. As the alcohol warmed his veins he expatiated on the charms of Mrs. Heathcote and Mrs. Gresham, and the agreeable manners of the diplomatic corps. His friends listened, more incredulous than awed. Such as believed him had themselves, in guise of interviewers or informants, penetrated into the atmosphere of that august presence and they had come forth sadder men. In fact, one newspaper reporter forcing himself at an unbidden moment, had met such voluble rebuff, such opprobrious epithet, such reckless expletive, that the sense of obloquy made him peculiarly hilarious over his comrade's brighter fortune.

"I say, Johnny," he kept repeating, "the

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old lady's got a mash on you, that's certain. I never was one of her little pets. How do you do it, eh, old man? Give us a tip. We want to play with the quality, too."

Yes, she had held her own. But these women, were they right? Was it slipping from her now, that wand so feverishly coveted, so tightly grasped? was it insecure? Were the hands weakening just a little? Was there a moment's atony? a loosening of the clutch? It hardly seemed so this afternoon. It was a very energetic step with which she moved to the mirror after her guests' departure, and a stout voice in which she reprimanded the servant's carelessness for dropping coal upon the carpet. When the malefactor had retreated—his compunction seemed perfunctory—she did a peculiar thing. She examined herself critically in the glass—not herself, but her front teeth. She touched one to find that it moved slightly. Mrs. Clyde was not a vain woman. In fact, it was the complaint of a rising generation of dainty self-worshippers that her toilet was somewhat slighted to meet the exigencies of her busy days; that she hurried the preparations in which they dawdled so many

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hours. There were other things they found to blame. The presence, for instance, of the "rats," who, if not "introduced," were nevertheless obnoxious in drawing-rooms where one wished to talk freely and not be recorded. She was not vain, and she was now an elderly woman, less than ever engaged in thought of personal conquest and growing careless as to personal adornment. There was one beauty, however, which the devastating processes of time in the gradual fading of complexion and thinning of hair had respected. She had retained her pretty teeth. It was with a peculiar start of apprehension she recognised an impending calamity, for such it seemed to her. "A front one, too," she said aloud. "How dreadful! It must be the dentist's fault; I must go there and see if anything can be done to save it. Those horrid tea-biscuits would loosen nails out of one's shoes." The simile was not pertinent or happy, but its felicity was of no moment in the revelations of her melancholy investigation. Her hands felt cold, her heart heavy at the prospect of this new battle with time which she knew was already lost and whose waging is deemed by the

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onlooker absurd or tragical according to his nature or his mood. "I once heard of a woman all of whose teeth loosened and fell from the gums at thirty," she thought with a shudder. "I have kept mine so much longer, I suppose I ought to be grateful." But somehow it hurt her, and all that evening at a dinner party the necessitated prudence of the dilemma left its sting of torment.

"Mrs. Philetus was not in good form," said the hostess, crossly, to her husband afterward. They were a youthful, modest pair who had somewhat advertised the important matron to help on their entertainment. "She was dull and sleepy; I am sorry I asked her. She is generally such good fun."

"I did not notice anything wrong."

"Oh, my dear, you never notice anything. You are too busy saying to the women the one thing that I wish you would not."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that there is a form of suffering Dante left out of his Purgatory, that is listening to one's husband—if he happens to be that kind—putting one down hopelessly into the category of dowdies by his admissions of one's

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makeshifts, and his explanations that it is only when one has company that one dines at eight and has pudding."

"You must be crazy."

"A form of insanity, my dear, shared by a good many wives, I imagine."

"I can't understand."

"Why did you tell Mrs. Clyde that I made my gown myself out of one of mamma's and that I got up every morning at seven to wash the baby?"

"Why, I wanted her to know what a clever little puss you were."

"I detest you!" said the young woman, bursting into tears. "There's no use, I simply can't bear it. I hoped," she sobbed, "they would never find out the butler was hired, and I heard you saying so to that horrid, smirking Mrs. Mount-Cuthbert——"

"Why, my darling, he smelled so of onions I thought it better to disclaim him as our own."

"Couldn't they find that out without your attracting attention to it?"

Mrs. Clyde was forgotten in a moist embrace

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in which the penitent blatantly abjured every vestige of his self-respect.

When Mrs. Clyde returned from this feast at which she had left such consternation, she found a young gentleman smoking a cigar in her library. It was her nephew, Dunham Crane. He was the son of that Ringletta of distant days who was still alive, still on the Merrimac, and the mother of many children. This was her youngest. Mr. Dunham had died; Mary, the maiden sister, lived at the homestead. Gabriella went there more and more infrequently, and to her nephews and nieces she was little more than a name.

Picking up a newspaper one morning she had been struck with the portrait of a youth upon its first page, and in other papers she found the same limning—the fatal pictorial epidemic had set in. On this particular morning he seemed to be everywhere, and there was his name too, in large type, with several columns dwelling upon him in encomiums mixed with measurements of chest and thigh, weight, width and girth, with a word thrown in about bloody beef and weak tea diet. It dawned upon her

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that she was the insignificant aunt of a far-famed celebrity. It was now only a running match, but there were reminiscences, unobserved by her at the time, of the sporting columns of the last year. He was growing, it seemed. There had been boat races, a tennis triumph. Here was a hero indeed! She skipped the details, they always tired her, and asked the errant knight of her afternoon tea hour confusing questions. She was answered with surprise. Why! didn't she know the full measure of this youth's renown? He was the finest "pitcher" in the country; had done a phenomenal series in the international championship at Toronto; he was immense! And to think that she had pitied them, these Cranes of Dunham; wondered how to help them, and so, wondering, had ignored them! And all the time they were developing, learning how to walk alone, to leap, to fly, to wrestle, to endure. Wonderful inheritance of a common ancestry!

"Dear little fellow," she said to her friends, "I am going to send for him. He is just out of college, with honours, I am told, for he is something more than an athlete." A girl who was

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present thought the "more" superfluous. "It is but right that he should have a New York frolic. Please, Mr. Atherton, put him up at the Knickerbocker, and you, Mr. Remington, at the Union. I am going to ask the women to be nice to him. I'll give a dance next Thursday."

"Why, we're just standing about to see him arrive," said Mr. Atherton. "There will be a procession and lanterns, I am sure of it. All we ask is to beat the drums."

"Depend upon it, he can toddle alone," said Mr. Remington. "The future belongs to girth and brawn."

"And how they despise us," sighed Atherton, "we who are fast becoming the irksome minority."

"Clever people bore stupid ones much more than stupid ones the clever," said Mrs. Heathcote, who had dropped in to leave a bunch of roses for Mrs. Clyde from the glass houses of her *ferme ornée.*

"In other words," said Atherton, "we get out of people and things only that with which we supply them."

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It is an uneventful life in which the records of childhood are closely prized. They grow musty on the shelves where brighter volumes of later data are stored. Yet Gabriella remarked with interest the likeness of her nephew to the fair sister who had been the companion of her girlhood and it recalled a vivid past.

"Bless me," she greeted him, "how you have grown! It seems but yesterday that you were an infant. So like Ringletta, too; the same hair. And how are they all at dear Dunham? Is your aunt Mary nicely, and your mother? Did you know my son-in-law would run for Congress? We are all agog about it. Your cousin Pauline and my grandbabies are up the Hudson. I gave her a place there. You must go and see her. She will be delighted."

As she disencumbered herself of her wraps and advanced under the lamps with the patronizing words, she wondered if he was awed by her *entourage*. She examined him from head to heel, the champion! He was a spare young gentleman of medium height and indefinite colouring, pale, with a pair of trenchant blue eyes,

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thin straight lips and an expression of great intelligence.

He was dressed neatly but without elegance —there was some lack about the collar and necktie. Mrs. Clyde saw at once that it would need all his prestige of sport and hers of the *salon* to make him popular in her circle. Then, as she turned him over thus in her eye and her judgment, she became aware that she, too, was an object to him of the keenest curiosity; that he was weighing her also in some invisible scale, holding her in his hands, as it were, and lifting her this way and that at his pleasure. An unexplained impulse led her to hoist back to her fat, very bare shoulders the half-discarded draperies of her warm opera cloak. Her fingers were laden with rings—her manicure was suing her for the care of her nails. These jewelled, mortgaged hands raised her fan before her bosom, with a helpless gesture at once protesting and apologetic. She remembered to have had the same sensation sometimes when Pauline questioned her motives and impulses with inept, exasperating insistence. As her nephew investigated the minutest detail of her apparel she

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recognised the same mysterious smile upon his lips as on her child's. An uneasy impression fell upon her that instead of his being confounded, as she had expected, with her magnificence, he gazed at it with the ignorant eye of his provincial Yankee intolerance.

"My! aren't you superb!" he said to her. "I knew what to expect, I was prepared, but I am rattled!"

She found no word to answer, but continued to hug her cloak and stare at him, confused, humiliated, she knew not wherefore.

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CHAPTER XXIII

He had seen her huddling up a church aisle at Dunham on one or two occasions with the heavy pall of a family funeral over her, and had been the recipient of a muffled black-crape kiss. This was the first time he really had met the lady face to face in the full regalia of her splendours. Unlike the reverent shepherd of Midian, he did not take his shoes from off his feet. Reverence was not Dunham Crane's conspicuous characteristic. He was somewhat of an iconoclast.

The next morning she had recuperated and, after several mornings—she was old-fashioned enough to appear at the early breakfast—over their tea and chocolate, at nine o'clock, they became fairly good friends. The free hand with which he emptied the entire cream jug on his hominy and the avidity with which his teeth planted themselves in her best sudatory peaches,

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proved a generous mind as well as a promising digestion. In his evening clothes he was found to meet the requisitions of convention, and the fact that he danced admirably commended him to the younger set. Absolutely virtuous in his relations with the other sex, Dunham Crane thought girls created to dance, married women to keep the pot boiling. With a keen respect for feminine intellect and a praiseworthy belief in women's innocence, the allurement of their youth as the helplessness of their age awoke in him not one thrill of gallantry, not one spark of devotion. Chivalric instincts were as unknown to him as unlawful desires. He was sufficient unto himself. Not vain, he had no wish to please. With but mediocre artistic appreciation, he was left cold by beauty. He was, however, honest, straightforward, conscientious, cheery, unaffected, making light of his prowess and of the notoriety which turns older and more solid heads.

Was it then some hostility of two nervous organizations which made Mrs. Clyde feel herself at disadvantage when in his company? It was difficult to explain, but sometimes, as she

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watched him consuming her viands, drinking her coffee, smoking her cigarettes, she asked herself why his presence in her house brought to her a certain unrest. An odd dissatisfaction possessed her, so potent indeed that her sentences became involved and ungrammatical when she addressed him, her tongue gave unexpected twists to her simplest meanings, which were coarsened or cheapened without her own volition. Had she encountered in this stripling an individuality stronger than her own? Why was it that in the midst of her luxury and her puissance she sometimes felt herself, under the ray of his chilly eye, only a grotesque old person, unwieldy and ridiculous? This impression deepened one day at the luncheon hour into catastrophe.

"What kind of a hat is that?" her nephew asked abruptly, holding his fork half-way to his mouth. He had, certainly, the New England faculty of making himself disagreeable. Mrs. Clyde flushed.

"It is a creation of Rebout's, just unpacked last evening. Do you not like—magenta?"

"It is too flamboyant," he replied, filling his

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mouth with steak; "it sticks up too much. You'd be mobbed if you wore it in Boston."

"Thank God I live in New York," ejaculated Mrs. Clyde, with some heat, "where people are too much occupied to mob ladies and their bonnets in the streets."

"Whew!" said Dunham Crane.

Then, feeling he must be taught a lesson, she added, with spirit, "You are very young, my dear, and have a great many things to learn, one of which is that when you don't like a woman's dress you can keep your opinion to yourself."

"I beg your pardon," he said, good-naturedly. "I did not mean to offend you, Aunt Gabriella." But there was a twinkle in his regard that angered her.

"Because the women of Dunham put on bombazine and caps at thirty, it is no reason why women of a higher civilization should imitate them," she said, gaining some of her old courage, which somehow lately had been in eclipse. "In Europe it is women of my age who rule society." As she spoke she bit with violence into a piece of crust. Something snapped. She thought her head had fallen in her plate.

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One must be sound for vehemence. With her handkerchief to her lip she beat a hasty exit. She did not appear for two or three days, cancelled her engagements, pleaded illness. Yet she emerged wrapped in dark veilings at dusk and was driven in secret to her dentist's.

"It must be your careless work," she said to him, in her altered utterance.

He mounted her to the plush throne, adjusting his glasses. He was a jocular person and a philosopher, as suited his grim calling.

"Oh, it isn't my work," he said, examining; "come, don't be unjust."

"Well? What?"

"It is anno domini," he answered, laughing.

Her sense of humour rose to meet his in a smile of singular vacuity. "I look so queer," she said.

"It is part of the programme, part of the programme," said the dentist, with brutal kindliness.

"Oh, my God! how horrible!"

"Pshaw! We will fix you up in a jiffy. Nobody will be the wiser. You have kept along so much the better than most of them. Why,

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the lady who has just left here, a young woman——"

"Don't tell me," said Mrs. Clyde, writhing. "I had rather not know."

It changed her very little after all. Only her daughter worried over it and one or two intimate friends remarked it, so skillfully can modern artifice repair such mishap.

In these days people began to complain that she was less exclusive; that one met people at her house who were at least "doubtful;" that she accepted invitations which were not even this but positively objectionable; that the varnish on her carriage was deplorably cracked and her men-servants were shabby; that she was becoming stingy, the first herald of age. The loudest to denounce these new vagaries of one from whom was slipping something so hardly relinquished, was a young woman of rare beauty and brilliant position whom Mrs. Clyde had rescued from seclusion where reverses of fortune had plunged her family. She had loudly voiced the girl's loveliness and her claims to recognition. Had dressed, housed, carried her about; had kept her for months at Newport, for weeks

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in town, had taken her to Europe, and finally had married her to the first *parti* in the land, almost in the world. The exchequer of Archer Orvis, if not equal to the czar's, was greater than the Queen of England's, added to which substantial advantages he was young and had good looks, sense, health and temper, was well born, well bred, and ardently enamoured. The chorus started by this young belle was quickly swelled by those who but a few short years before would gladly have been the beneficiaries of Mrs. Clyde's wide hospitality, but to whom the hazard of fortune had brought new privileges of criticism and detraction.

Like all persons reputed wealthy and frequently named in daily journals, Mrs. Clyde was the recipient of a mail freighted with quaint inconsequence. Offers of marriage, advertisements of business ventures, recommendations of patent medicines, cosmetics and hair dyes, mingled with cries of famine, appeals to power and influence, autograph quests and the religious crank's invective. Rarely worthy of notice or reply, the pile was nevertheless invariably examined. To the beggars, in spite of her re-

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puted parsimony, she did not always turn deaf ears. One morning a child's scrawl arrested her attention. Misspelled, ingenuous in its faith, stumbling in its foolishness, it implored "rich" Mrs. Clyde to send *immediately* a velocipede to Peoria, Illinois, to Gabriella Funk. "All the girls in my class have 'em," it read, "but pa's to pur to give 1 to me O ma'am please you'r so rich sen me 1 & i'le pay bak if ever i get rich like you." There was upon the poor little scrawl an unmistakable stamp of genuineness. An hour later Mrs. Clyde, touched—by the name, perhaps—somewhere in her lonely spirit —was on her way to Maiden Lane. "They are better and cheaper there; the uptown men are robbers." She bought and expressed the toy. She also stood about in the damp and wet her feet.

In the evening there was to be a banquet in honour of a Russian grand duke at the house of a lady who many years before had given Mrs. Clyde a kick in the dressing-room of a mutual friend. It may be said that she had not kicked her since, and the two were reputed allies. But

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we seldom adore those upon whom we have heaped indignity and who later surpass us, and it is safe to conjecture that, at any rate, the kicker's affection was tepid. She exemplified its measure to-night by giving, very improperly, the seat of honour at her table between the host and the royal *invité*, not to Mrs. Clyde, who as the eldest person present and the best known was qualified to occupy it, but to the slender girl she had befriended. Radiantly beautiful, mourning a father-in-law in black satin and diamond coronet, patrician, indolent, disdainful, the spoiled child of destiny slipped as if it were a right into the place assigned her, while Mrs. Clyde, astonished, apparently overlooked—there was some mistake, it seemed, of wilful malice or negligent forgetfulness, about her seat—brought up the rear as best she could on the arm of an unknown broker who had been torn from his obscurity at the eleventh hour to fill a void. The evening was raw with the portent of snow. She had arrived late. She felt cold. Between her and the royal guest there towered a mass of flowers. Quite at the foot of the table, with an insignificant member of the grand duke's suite at her left

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who spoke no tongue coherently except his own, she had time to indulge in such reflections as the interminable feast permitted. Now and then she caught a sight of her whilom protegée, who accorded her, after a blind survey devoid of recognition, a supercilious nod snatched from more profitable pastime.

It is Dante, I believe, who plunges ingratitude in the lowest hell. Here it holds high revel. None escape slights, when all is said, and their degree lies in the thickness of the surface through which the torturing instrument is thrust. Mrs. Philetus Clyde was a stalwart warrior whose skin was tanned by long exposure, nevertheless to-night the limit had been reached of her endurance. Probably she was already ill and the resentment and the pain that rose to stifle her was but the premonition of physical overthrow. The bitter thoughts that welled within her were indescribable. She tried in vain to combat them, not to give these cruel women a chance to gloat at her discomfiture, not to be made a subject of their raillery and jests. But by and bye her heart-beats seemed to cease, she gasped and put out one hand. In the general

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gaiety no one observed that she swayed from side to side until an exclamation from the broker drew the attention of the Russian secretary. Between them they assisted her to the drawing-room. The hostess did not leave her seat. She ordered that a maid be sent to Mrs. Clyde, who pleaded faintness; she also ordered a window opened lest his royal highness should suffer discomfort. The room was overwarm. Mrs. Orvis raised a languid eyelash and laughed in the duke's eyes. "She is one of our eccentrics," she said, shrugging her shoulders. "Perhaps she did it to attract attention."

The disturbing element adroitly swept away with the untouched wine, the plate and chair, the broker and the Slav drew across the gap. The ripple of talk for an instant suspended flowed on unruffled. All trace of a discordant presence was effaced before the rumbling of the convenient cab had died; for a cab was got and she was put into it. A footman amiably prepared to jump to the box—Mrs. Clyde's own carriage had not returned—but she insisted that she felt better and declined the servant's offer. She considerately thought he might be missed

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on such a night; the distance was not great. The grand duke continued to absorb his dinner with composure. He had not caught the name of the large lady who had vanished. He was rather bored. He preferred an entirely different society, which was more animated. Nature, he thought, made the woman; society the lady. He preferred the former. He was sick of shams. The propitiatory grace of the child at his side said little to his senses; of imagination he had none. It may be as well that princes and kings are generally vulgar souls—their responsibilities would kill the sensitive.

The cab lumbered up the avenue. An icy draft pierced through the loose panes. A light snow had fallen. It lay in heaps where the wind had whisked it. In other spots the asphalt was quite black, mirror-like, and once or twice the shambling horse shied at his own reflection. The flakes had crystallized against the lamps, making them look like mystic moons lost in gray space. The driver breathed on his palms, blowing out from his lungs wreaths of bluish vapour. When he pulled up with a jerk at Mrs. Clyde's door he sat still on his perch for a few

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moments, then he began to doze, with one of those sudden torpors common to men who sit all day in the open air. He did not know if he had slept, he did not know how long he had sat there; no one disturbed him, no one stirred inside. By and bye he shook himself, surprised, and tumbling from the box peered in at the window. It was open. Two dark, gleaming, terrible eyes met his own dazed ones. She tried to speak to him. He saw she could not, that something was amiss with her.

"God Almighty save us," he exclaimed, "but the poor lady has had a stroke!"

He floundered up the steps and rang the bell several times. It reverberated loudly through the silent house. The drowsy "second man," thinking it was a beggar—this was their hour—turned over in Mrs. Clyde's favourite armchair before her library fire and took another nap. The butler roused him with an oath, threatening to tell on him. When they got her into the hall at last, before they could undress her, she sank to the floor. The servants—mostly new ones—were greatly frightened. They fell over one another, uselessly declamatory. The

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women screamed aloud. On the whole, however, they found it interesting and piquant. Cabby's bloated disk protruded from the doorway claiming his fare. He was pressed into the service and sent to the doctor's with the promise of ample rewards. A gentleman friend, Mr. Remington, was thought to be in town, and the housekeeper sent him a note addressed to the club where she fancied that he dined. But he did not come. He was not there or at his rooms, where the club steward despatched the messenger. A telegram was indited to Mrs. Trefusis. At midnight an answer came from the Hudson River station that Mr. and Mrs. Trefusis were in California. Then the housekeeper and the maids all remembered that Mrs. Clyde had told them so. A former nurse of Pauline's, who lived in Varick Street, was summoned. At four o'clock of the morning she arrived. The physicians were in attendance. They had found the helpless heap which had been dragged to the study sofa still dressed out in its jewels and velvets. They brought some calm and some common sense. And now Mrs. Clyde was in her bed. With the loosening of her garments voice had come back

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to her, breathless, laboured, but still audible. There was no stroke; it was something of the heart and lungs with acute complications of congestion. The old nurse from Varick Street brought a measure of affection to her task of watcher.

"Poor dear," she said, soothingly, as she patted the pillows. "Poor dear, and not a chick to tell her sorrows to." For Mrs. Clyde raved at the ingratitude of the world, raved, moaned and tossed and fretted. Her arraignment of Mrs. Orvis hurtled against sharp inquiries as to the condition of her affairs. She incoherently cried out wild accusations against a community disposed to treacherous practices. The nurse insisted there was a friend in Boston who should be sent for, a Mrs. Devereux. By the fortunate aid of a retentive memory she recalled her address. The next morning Mr. Remington was installed in the library to receive visitors. A few inquisitive women looked in and asked foolish questions. In the afternoon Mrs. Devereux came. She wired to Dunham. Miss Mary was ill with a fever, Mrs. Crane and her son had just sailed for Bermuda, Lydian could not leave a

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daughter on the eve of a dangerous accouchement. Pauline's nurse met the new-comer at the door.

"I sent for the bishop," she said to her. "He is absent, but there is a young clergyman in the parlour, only she won't see him."

"Have him sent away!" Mrs. Clyde was persisting in hoarse entreaty, as Clara entered.

"Who is it?" she said, as Mrs. Devereux crossed the threshold. "Take him away. He wants to talk to me of my immortal soul. I don't want immortality. I want peace."

"Gella," said Mrs. Devereux, bending over her.

At the old pet name so rarely heard now, Mrs. Clyde started. A change came over her features, a smile for a moment illumined them.

"Who spoke?" she said in a low voice, as one who, lost, in the night listens to some echo in the world. "Ringletta, is that you?"

"No, it is Coy."

"What Coy? Coy Train?"

"No, dear, your old friend Coy, her mother, Clara Devereux."

"When did you come?"

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"I have just arrived."

"You are very kind, kinder than the people here. Tell them to give you the blue room. Those servants do nothing. You must be made comfortable. They'll all get dismissed as soon as I am up."

"Ah, Gella, we have known each other so many, many years."

"Years and years," said the sick woman, "years and years and years."

Mrs. Devereux began to cry, softly, on the hand she clasped between her own.

Slowly, slowly, a tear crept from under the dry orb of Mrs. Clyde's eyelid. Falling, it mingled with those of her friend. She pulled her down close and whispered, as she so held her, in her ear:

"That silly boy came in here to promise me that if I repented of my sins I'd have an eternity of joy. I don't want it. I don't want him. I might have been willing to see the bishop; he understands me; he is a man of the world. I don't know if my sins have been blacker than those of the people who have eaten my dinners and reviled them; who caressed me with one

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hand while the other was in my pocket; who fleeced and bled me and now flout me. I have given a good deal, I know, and I have got mighty small returns. They have called me mean because I made my economies, saved for Pauline and her little children. They are nice children—have you seen them? She would marry a poor man. I over-educated her—speaking dead languages and playing on the piano, harp or dudelsack isn't going to make a girl marry well. She was too accomplished for noodles like Beaumains. I beg your pardon. I forgot he's your son-in-law. Mine is clever. His politics are ruinous, but I will see them through it. I like him. He's got go in him. He must win. We must win. But, between you and me, Coy, I have had enough of it. I don't want any more. If I thought I'd have to live forever I would not repent to get heaven. Why can't they let me alone? I'm tired to death. Don't they see it? So *tired.*"

Tired! She had said it—voiced that inextinguishable fatigue which waits upon the feet of life. Who does not know that hour of discouragement when promise palls and fulfilment

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exhausts? Who has not felt the peace of the last ritual, "Ashes to ashes, dust to dust"? Who has not turned from immortality to long for oblivion? The enfolding darkness! Good-night! *Good*-night! Welcome, kind sleep, too deep for tears!

Somewhat shocked at this exhibition of spiritual indigence, Mrs. Devereux shrank at a problem too profound for her simple faith. She contented herself with purling forth a word about the love of Christ.

"His love?" said the sick woman. "I'm sure it can't be like that of his creatures—a poor thing enough. I am as God made me, a useless enough bundle of goods just now. I guess he knows his handiwork and my needs without my bothering him and wasting my breath—it's short enough. He has got his hands full. Why should I chatter with that foolish lad who came in here to persuade me I was in danger of perdition and to tell me nonsense I was brought up on, and knew all about before he was born?"

The priest was put off with the excuse of needed repose.

"I am very glad you have come," said the

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physician, intercepting Mrs. Devereux as she crossed the hall. "She seems so alone. I will now leave her in your charge until her daughter can arrive, with the nurses and my assistant, whom you will find in the study at the head of the stairs."

Mrs. Devereux went to the study. The assistant was sitting at Mrs. Clyde's desk writing a prescription. He was a young man with a sharp, clear-cut profile and a frowning, intent brow.

"Do I disturb you?" she asked.

"I have done," he replied, rising.

"Is she very ill?"

"Yes, she is very ill."

"Have you long been her physician?"

"My chief has. I never saw her before."

"You had heard of her, of course." Mrs. Devereux smiled as she seated herself.

The butler had brought her a cup of tea and she stopped to drink it.

"No, none, thanks," said the doctor, declining the domestic's proffer.

"She is a remarkable woman," she continued.

"Ah? How so?" asked the physician.

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"Why, in every way. Her career has been wonderful, exceptional."

"I don't have much time for social notes. We don't read them in the hospitals," he replied.

"No, I suppose not. But Mrs. Clyde was more than a mere butterfly"—she corrected the past tense—"she is a very brilliant woman. Her house has been the resort of distinguished people."

"They seem to have left her pretty well to herself—the distinguished people! I have not met with a lonelier death-bed."

"Do you think her in such danger?"

"I said death-bed because," he went on, "she was in danger."

"And now do you think she'll pull through?"

"We have hope of it. She has rallied marvellously. The action of the heart is almost normal."

"Do you despise people of her type?" said Mrs. Devereux, boldly, looking at him.

"What! People who do—er—this sort of thing?" he said, glancing up at the rich hangings, the pictures and the bric-à-brac upon the

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walls and tables, and at the cards and invitations which strewed the escritoire.

"Yes, who have her ambitions and the genius to forward them."

He looked narrowly at the worn, gentle face of his interlocutor. "I think there are more important things."

"What are they?" said Mrs. Devereux. "Are all our earthly hopes and schemes and attainments then futile, useless? You, for instance, what are you working for night and day? Granted you wish to alleviate suffering—a noble aspiration—shall you forego the rewards of fame?" She was amazed at her own temerity.

"Oh, don't rank me too high," he said with a caustic laugh. "I am working for money, nothing else. Just to keep the wolf from the door that my mother and sisters may not starve. I long ago gave up all dreams of distinction. As for helping humanity, it is past help."

"Why, then," she said, "are you so hard on others whose aims may be equally and only differently material? Mrs. Clyde has given a great deal of pleasure to others. There are temptations in a life like hers."

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"Was I hard? I beg your pardon. I suppose the fight for bread takes sentimentality out of us and spoils our manners. I judge nobody, least of all this lady. I *was* curious to see her, as you surmise; I *had* heard of her. She looks like a gladiator. I am not impugning her refinement; there were women gladiators, you know, as well as knights and senators. No doubt the qualities of the *retiarii* and *secutores*" —he was near his classics—"are useful in her arena."

"She was a gladiator worthy of her hire," said Mrs. Devereux, smiling sadly. "She took the prizes."

"One would not think so to look at her. It is an unhappy face. One wonders if they were worth her while—the prizes."

"Ah, all are the same! They vary in name only; all, at least, which have the stain of earth upon them."

"I will not give her the *pollicem versum.* I think I can say the end is not yet. She will recover this time. She is very strong."

"She was always strong," said Mrs. Devereux.

THE END

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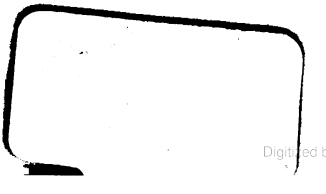
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